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ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES
Oct-Dec 2005 / 537 NS
(Vol VII, Issue 4)

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ਜੀਵਤ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸੇਵਿਓ ਅਪਨਾ
ਚਲਤੇ ਰਾਖਿਓ ਚੀਤਿ ॥



*In life he served the Lord;
And departing he had only Him in his mind.*

This issue of the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies* (Oct-Dec 2005 /537 NS) is dedicated to the memory of Maj Gen (Dr) Jaswant Singh AVSM, General Secretary of the Institute of Sikh Studies and Associate Editor of the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, who departed for his heavenly abode on July 3, 2005.

ਧੰਨਿ ਜੀਓ ਤਿਹ ਕੋ ਜਗ ਮੈ;
ਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਹਰਿ ਚਿੱਤ ਮੈ ਜੁੱਧੁ ਬਿਚਾਰੈ ।
ਦੇਹ ਅਨਿੱਤ ਨ ਨਿੱਤ ਰਹੈ;
ਜਸੁ-ਨਾਵ ਚੜ੍ਹੈ ਭਵ ਸਾਗਰ ਤਾਰੈ ।
ਧੀਰਜ-ਧਾਮ ਬਨਾਇ ਇਹੈ ਤਨ;
ਬੁੱਧਿ ਸੁ ਦੀਪਕ ਜਿਉਂ ਉਜੀਆਰੈ ।
ਗਿਆਨਹਿ ਕੀ ਬਢਨੀ ਮਨਹੂ;
ਹਾਥ ਲੈ ਕਾਤੁਰਤਾ ਕੁਤਵਾਰ ਬੁਹਾਰੈ ।

- ਕ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਨਾਵਤਾਰ, 2492 - 1

*Praise be to him
Who has the name of the Lord on his lips,
And thought of struggle against evil in his mind;
Who knows that human body will not last,
And who crosses the ocean of life in the boat of His praise;
Who makes his body an abode of forbearance,
And radiates wisdom like a lamp;
And who with the broom of Divine knowledge,
Sweeps the garbage of cowardice away.*

EDITORIAL

WHO DECIDES ONE'S RELIGION ?

Freedom of faith is universally recognised as a fundamental human right. The United Nations Charter leaves no doubt about it, and the Constitution of India fully endorses it. One can profess and practise a religion of one's choice in complete freedom. This freedom obviously covers the choice of one's own religion only, and does not grant anyone the right to choose a religion for others.

In India, some veteran leaders of the majority community, particularly in the VHP, have, however, assumed *suo moto* the role of determining the religion of minority communities like the Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains. They continue to declare from time to time that the Sikhs are Hindus. These irksome statements cause understandable anxiety and concern to the proud and self-respecting Sikh community, since these tantamount to a denial of their distinct identity and refusal to recognise Sikhism as a sovereign religion.

Taking a favourable view of this strange attitude, one could argue that these statements indicate their love for the Sikhs and a desire for closeness with them. Such probably was the case, when, in the past, some great Hindu leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, impressed by the valiant struggles waged by the Sikhs and their unparalleled sacrifices in the cause of freedom and defence of the poor and the helpless, advised the Hindus of the Punjab to bring up at least one of their sons as an *amritdhari* Sikh. His advice did not fall on deaf ears. Many Hindus converted to Sikh religion and became staunch followers, and even leaders of their new faith. Master Tara Singh, whose daring saved a large part of the Indian union from going to Pakistan, and Dr Sahib Singh, the famous *gurbani* grammarian, were among countless such converts.

If the spirit that motivated Pandit Malaviya had continued to prevail, there should have been no problems. Although the Sikhs are Sikhs and not Hindus, the bonds of kinship and affinity between the two communities would have been so strong that the controversy as to whether the Sikhs are Hindus, would appear completely irrelevant.

But that spirit died with Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and his contemporaries. Although present leadership claims loudly that the Sikhs are Hindus, but organise their massacre in thousands in broad day light. They no longer ask the Hindu families to bring up any of their members as *amritdhari* Sikhs. They would rather make sure now that all Sikhs return to Hindu fold, and to absorb the brave Khalsa created by the Gurus, that liberated India from centuries-old slavery of foreign invaders, into the same society that had tolerated that slavery without any protest.

Macauliffe had warned against the possible extinction of the Khalsa a hundred years ago. He says, "Truly wonderful are the strength and vitality of Hinduism. It is like the boa constrictor of the Indian forests. When a petty enemy appears to worry it, it winds round its opponent, crushes it in its folds and finally causes it to disappear in its capacious interior. In this way... Hinduism disposed of Buddhism..... it absorbed the religion of the Scythian invaders in Northern India, it has converted uneducated Islam in India into a semi-paganism, and in this way it is disposing off the reformed and once hopeful religion of Baba Nanak, still the comparatively young religion is making a vigorous struggle for life, but its ultimate destruction is, it is apprehended, inevitable without state support."

Macauliffe's fears were not ill founded. He was aware of the intentions and plans of the Arya Samajists and their Guru, Swami Daya Nand Saraswati, who ridiculed the prophets of all other religions including Guru Nanak. He met with some initial success and managed to create a dent in the Sikh following. Even Giani Ditt Singh was taken in earlier. But he soon discovered his real intentions and he, along with Prof Gurmukh Singh and others, organised the Singh Sabha Movement, and put up a formidable resistance to the foul propaganda against the religion of the Gurus.

It is not necessary to go into the details of the subsequent history. It is clear, however, that the efforts to mislead the Sikh masses

continued with increased vigour. The onslaught has now assumed a subtle form through a renewed emphasis on the slogan 'Sikhs are Hindus'. Volumes have been written to show that Sikhs are Sikhs and not Hindus. They believe only in the Ten Gurus and their teachings enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib. The Guru Himself declared that he was neither a Hindu, nor a Musalman. How can his followers be called Hindus?

Mircea Eliade writes in *Encyclopaedia of Religion*:

"Guru Arjun was fully conscious of the new role he was planning for his community. In a passage from the *Adi Granth*, he mentions the separate identity the Sikhs had acquired in their hundred years of existence:

"I do not keep the Hindu fast, nor the Muslim Ramzan;
I serve Hari alone who is my refuge.
I serve the One Master who is also Allah.
I have broken with the Hindu and the Muslim,
I will not worship with the Hindu, nor like the Muslims go to Mecca.
I shall serve Him and no other.
I will not pray to idols, nor heed the Muslim Azan.
I shall put my heart at the feet of the One Supreme Being.
For, we are neither Hindu nor Muslim."

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 1136

Besides the author of *Dabistan-e-Mazahib*, a contemporary of Guru Hargobind, and a host of Persian chroniclers of the Guru period and the post-Guru period, have recorded that Sikhs are not Hindus and that their religion is different. Among several Western scholars of Sikh history, we may quote only two:

J D CUNNINGHAM:

"A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people, and the impress of Gobind has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames."

MACAULIFFE:

"Now there is here presented a religion totally unaffected by Semitic or Christian influences. Based on the concept of unity of

God, it rejected Hindu formularies, and adopted an independent ethical system, rituals and standards which were totally opposed to the theological beliefs of Guru Nanak's age and country. As we shall see hereafter, it would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system."

As early as 1899, Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha wrote his famous book, *Ham Hindu Nahin*. Since then countless volumes have appeared on the subject. The Institute of Sikh Studies has produced a huge body of literature to show that Sikhism is an independent and original religious dispensation, and that it is a radical departure from all earlier religious traditions in India. For, it is a whole-life system and does not recognise any dichotomy between spiritual and temporal life. Internationally, Sikhism is recognised among the five major world religions. Those who say that the Sikhs are Hindus have obviously not studied either of the two system. But if they have and still insist, it is an outright mischief, and is carried on for ulterior motives. The intention is to absorb the minorities into the Hindu fold through the 'boa constrictor' technique referred to by Macauliffe. Sikhs are the major stumbling block in the designs aimed at 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan', and are, therefore, a special target.

Although the threat has been constantly dangling over our heads, not many Sikhs were inclined to take it seriously, thinking that only a few ambitious people in the V.H.P. and R.S.S. backed it.

THE SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENT:

A recent Supreme Court judgement, however, has added a new dimension to the problem, so that the threat of the 'boa constrictor', has become real and can no more be taken with complacency. The relevant extract is reproduced below:

"The so-called minority communities like Sikhs and Jains were not treated as national minorities at the time of framing the Constitution. Sikhs and Jains, in fact, have throughout been treated as part of the wider Hindu community, which has different sects, sub-sects, faiths, modes of worship and religious philosophies. In various codified customary laws like Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act, Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act and other laws of pre- and post-Constitution period, definition of 'Hindu'

included all sects, sub-sects of Hindu religion including Sikhs and Jains.

“Thus, ‘Hinduism’ can be called a general religion and common faith of Indians, whereas ‘Jainism’ is a special religion formed on the basis of quintessence of Hindu religion.”

The judgement refers to Sikhs and Jains as ‘so-called’ minorities, and reduces them to sub-sects of Hindu religion (not even sects), so that even the nominal minority rights provided in the Constitution can be denied to them. The judgement leaves no doubt about it, in the following paragraph of the same judgement. With reference to the role of the Minority Commission, it says:

“The Commission, instead of encouraging claims from different communities for being added to a list of notified minorities under the Act, should suggest ways and means to help create social conditions where the list of notified minorities is gradually reduced and done away with altogether.”

The judgement obviously draws upon Section 25 of the Indian Constitution which clubs Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists with the Hindus for the purpose of various acts that form parts of the Hindu Code Bill. It, however, ignores the following facts :

- a) The Sikh representatives of the Constituent Assembly refused to sign the Constitution in 1949, simply because of the above reason.
- b) The Sikhs represented against the above provisions before the Constitution Review Commission a couple of years ago. The Commission accepted the Sikh view, and has recommended deletion/amendment to the Section 25.
- c) Prior to the adoption of the Indian Constitution (without the consent of the Sikhs) the Sikhs had always been treated as a separate entity. The Cabinet Mission plan which led to the Independence of India Act, recognised the Sikhs as one of the three contending parties, the other two being the Muslims and others. In fact, the Hindus were not even mentioned as a party. They formed a part of ‘others’.

The judgement has some other serious implications, which deserve immediate notice:

- Minority status of a community will be determined at state level, and not at national level where the real power is concentrated.

As a result, the Sikhs will practically receive no benefit, because they are not a minority in Punjab where their vast majority lives.

- Even otherwise, no benefit is to be expected in the long run in view of the clear hint that the list of minorities is to be gradually reduced and done away with altogether.
- Minorities look to the Supreme Court for protection. But when the latter wants the list of minorities done away with altogether, God help the minorities in India!

Existence with Sikh identity is threatened not only through cultural absorption by the 'boa-constrictor' syndrome hinted by Macauliffe, but even through organised violence like the one witnessed during massacre of thousands of Sikhs, including women and children in 1984, engineered by top leaders and unashamedly condoned by the Govt. as well as the judiciary.

We are indeed in the midst of a very disturbing situation. The Institute of Sikh Studies has expressed its deep concern through a resolution reported elsewhere in the present issue of the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, in which the SGPC has been requested to file a review petition in the Supreme Court against the judgement, besides initiating action for the required legislation..

Besides the Sikhs, other minorities should see this warning. It is high time all the minorities sat together to find ways to ensure their survival and an honourable existence.

The situation also demands a serious thought on the part of leaders of all political parties to allay the fears of the minorities.

India is a multicultural and multi-religious country. It is necessary to create conditions in which all cultures and religions can live harmoniously and contribute their mite towards its greatness. Attempts on the part of any community to dominate over others, can only lead to disaster. This is a lesson from our history. Let us not forget it.

International community is watching. The 1984 genocide of the Sikhs and the more recent massacre of Muslims in Gujarat have brought enough bad name and disgrace to India. These have neither been forgotten nor forgiven. There are agencies to keep a watch over violations of human rights. World has shrunk into a single global village, where Modis, Tytlers and Sajjan Kumars will not be tolerated indefinitely.

As far as the Sikhs are concerned, India is their homeland. They love it, they have made tremendous sacrifices for it, and will continue to do so. They want to live here as equal partners, and respectable citizens as followers of an independent religion, and not as a sub-sect or an adjunct to another religion.

We trust that responsible leaders of the majority community also want peace and harmony, and are keen to strengthen the bonds of kinship with the Sikhs. That objective can be achieved only through recognising and respecting their distinct identity. Thoughtless assertions like 'Sikhs are Hindus' are counterproductive. The edifice of goodwill and friendship can only be raised on the foundation of understanding and mutual respect as equals.

Given that spirit, it will not be difficult to answer the question raised earlier — 'Who decides the religion of the Sikhs? The Sikhs, the Supreme Court, or others? The right answer can only be — 'The Sikhs themselves!'

□

..... "The study of other religious systems is not one that can be mastered in a short time, and this is perhaps particularly true of the great oriental religions. However, as in all cases involving religious convictions of others, we must respect, even when we do not necessarily understand. Also, we ought to be guided in matters concerning other faiths by the members of those faiths themselves. When in the case of Sikhs you find a whole religious community united in its strength of feeling on a given issue, it would seem to be most foolish to question their judgment. I would submit that so far as concerns the Sikh religion we should accept what the Sikh themselves say."

— Lord Mowbray (p. 82)
House of Lord, Oct 5, 1976

**MAJ GEN (DR) JASWANT SINGH AVSM
– A TRIBUTE –**

KARTAR SINGH*

I first met Jaswant in his office at HQ Western Army Command, Chandimandir. As Deputy Director Medical Services he was the senior most medical officer in our Western Army. I was highly impressed by his frank and outspoken attitude. His exuded professionalism of the highest order. But as a specialist who had performed life saving surgeries for years in hospitals, he seemed somewhat out of his elements in an administrative appointment.

Our friendship progressed gradually as he whole-heartedly supported my battle to restore the control of the Defence Services Officers Institute to its rightful custodians – HQ Western Command. His dedicated support was a morale booster in our prolonged but successful social mission. The club had gone into the hands of coterie of Bureaucrats.

Born on 4th April, 1934 into a Medical family of Sargodha, his schooling was good. In fact, he had a sharp and inquisitive mind and was a scholarship awardee in all his Board Examinations. As per his own inclination and that of his father (an eminent Doctor), he joined the Government Medical College, Amritsar. Tragedy struck his very entrance into the medical college, when his father died at a young age. Luckily the boy was determined and his elder brother, a Naval Officer, came to his aid. Noble man that Jaswant was by now, he later supported his younger siblings in education and settlement in life. The family's closeness to each other has been exemplary with Jaswant being outstanding in bonding all members into a pious, upright and highly responsive unit.

* Lt Gen (retd) PVSM, # 1801, Sector 34-D, Chandigarh

Young Jaswant Singh was brilliant in his College tenure. In 1957 he passed all Medical examinations in one attempt. 1958 saw him apply for entry into the Army Medical Corps (AMC), as this was his first choice. In a very competitive environment he got his ambitions first choice – Surgery. With two years full-fledged training at the Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC), Pune, he was a surgeon in 1965. Ambitious as he was, this was just not enough. He got permission to join the PGI, Chandigarh in 1967 to prepare and sit for the Maser of Surgery (MS) examination. With very limited leave this brilliant officer threw himself into an 18 hour a day schedule. His fellow Officers were aghast to be informed that Jaswant had achieved his aim in an incredible record period of six months.

In 1968 (a year later) he had also acquired a Master of Urology degree from the PGI, Chandigarh. He then launched into his surgical career with gusto and was posted, by turn, in various Army Hospitals in India. He was tireless once he entered the Operation Theatre, and would sometimes spend 6 to 8 hours flat carrying out operation after operation. On return home he is known to have slept exhausted with his uniform and boots on.

He married Mohinder Kaur *ji*, the daughter of a big Landlord of Sindh, now settled in Ludhiana. This lady was an ideal foil to this very enigmatic soldier. Minnie was a graduate with a very pious and generous outlook. As per his wishes, she relinquished any ambitions to take up a teaching career which she highly relished. Her role now was to welcome home this ‘mad’ doctor, who was so much in love with his profession that he needed fond nursing at home to revive his energies for the next day. This was an ideal combination that expanded into a family of five, with three very well educated and devoted daughters. I have seen rare devotion mixed with admiration for this unsparing father and devoted mother. They have all flourished in life – one of them is also a Doctor. All are married into upright and pious army families where as per the wishes of their parents, living is simple, orderly, and close-knit, and all members are teetotalers.

Meanwhile, Jaswant’s career was on the upward move. As a Surgeon he did a yeoman’s job in the 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pak wars. He was elevated to ‘Senior Advisor’ in Surgery – a very prestigious position, in 1982. He was involved as Consultant Surgeon in all the

Services Hospitals of the Country. He had already been appointed as Post-graduate teacher and Examiner in Surgery by Pune University in 1975. He reached his Zenith in the Armed Forces when he was promoted as Maj Gen (the second highest rank in the Medical Corps), and finally headed the Medical Services as DDMS Western Command.

One cannot, in this short space relate the many astounding achievements of this high-strung, dynamic and thoroughly professional surgeon doctor. One incident, related to me by eye-witness, comes to mind. In Jodhpur he was called on to carry out life saving surgeries on a group of soldiers whose vehicle had been hit by a train in a terrible accident. For hours he worked on patient after patient. In the case of the Subedar (Sikh Paltan) he operated without a minutes break for full 8 (eight) hours. After a very successful operation he found that in spite of all success the blood pressure of Subedar Sahib just would not stabilize. He didn't give up. The Subedar Major of the Sikh unit was called and told to start an *Akband Path* in his unit immediately. His words to the unit were, "I have done what a humble human surgeon can do. *Akal Purakh* will do the rest". Saying this, Jaswant crashed out on a hospital bed with his boots on for full 8 hours. On his waking up, the patient's Blood Pressure had fully stabilized. A miracle which the soldiers concerned marvel about to this day.

His tenure in the Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS) was a very highly dedicated one. As secretary and member of the Editorial Committee he was just outstanding. The Institute gained from strength to strength. His fund-raising acumen was ingenious. He excelled in public speaking and would visit Universities in Punjab and Haryana to address the audience on various subjects such as mass communications, health administration, educational uplift, etc. He was a prodigious reader and had an ocean of knowledge. Lately, he had started contributing valuable, well formulated articles to Health Magazines and columns in our national newspapers. He was a man of million qualities.

Although he carried on his work in surgery in some hospitals in Chandigarh after his retirement, these were mostly benevolent acts. His charges were what his patient could afford.

Akal Purakh has taken him away from us with an unexpected and sudden heart attack. But He was kind, in that Jaswant Ji died with

his affectionate family around him, literally sitting upright having partaken of cake and tea from the very loving hands of his wife (Minnie) and the youngest daughter. In just seconds his soul departed in conformity with this great man's continuous hurry to get good things done – Now, this very moment.

May *Akal Purakh* rest this noble soldier-doctor's soul in peace.
We shall miss him sorely in the IOSS, now and always. May *Wahguru* give his loved ones strength to bear the loss of a human being "Par Excellence".

□

*If our friends are blessed with merits
Let us share the same with them,
And relinquish, thereby, our own vices.
Sharing their merits
And discarding our demerits,
Let us deck ourselves
With the silks and embellishments of virtue
And tread, therewith, our life's way.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 765-66

ਜੇ ਗੁਣ ਹੋਵਨਿ ਸਾਜਨਾ ਮਿਲਿ ਸਾਝ ਕਰੀਜੈ ॥
ਸਾਝ ਕਰੀਜੈ ਗੁਣਹ ਕੇਰੀ ਛੋਡਿ ਅਵਗਣ ਚਲੀਐ ॥
ਪਹਿਰੇ ਪਟੰਬਰ ਕਰਿ ਅਡੰਬਰ ਆਪਣਾ ਪਿਤੁ ਮਲੀਐ ॥

AN ODE TO MY LOVING FATHER

TEJLEEN KAUR*

My mouth went dry, a lump formed in my throat and tears welled up in my eyes when I was asked to write about my loving, doting and illustrious father – a man with whom not only me and my family but many are proud to be associated. But many a time I have tears of joy too, streaming down my cheeks when I fondly remember him. After all – he led a full life, achieved what he wanted to, and touched the pinnacle of success. He even died the way he wanted to – helping and healing others till the last day – literally! I guess God grants the wishes of his chosen till their last breath – his death was painless and peaceful despite the plethora of medical problems he had.

Oozing with confidence, standing tall even in adversity, his ‘never-give-up’ attitude had helped us in tidying over many a problem. Infact, he had always been a pillar of strength for his entire family, his *fauji* brethren and the Sikh fraternity. He was a jovial gentleman who worked with devotion and dedication, gusto and *josh* till the last day. Even his friends were unaware of his failing health – he was one person who never complained, and pushed himself till the last iota of energy left in him. These are the feelings echoed by all.

A self-made man, he was a victim of partition. In fact, he lost his father the day he stepped into Medical College. And then started the struggle of life – to achieve and excel, which is confirmed by the awards and accolades showered on him in abundance.

The hallmark of his career were the two Post Graduate Degrees in Surgery and Urology he did from the prestigious PGI in a span of four months – a task people take four years to do ! He was the first Urologist in the Army, Navy and Air Force. For his professional excellence, he received the Commendation Card by the Chief of Army

* d/o late Maj Gen (Dr) Jaswant Singh AVSM, # 1801, Sector 33-D, Chandigarh

Staff. He converted the Military Hospital, Agra from its modest existence to a modern, well-equipped hospital. His slogan was ‘we are there for you from womb to tomb’. His tenure of Director Medical Services, Chandimandir as a Major General was the high point of his career. He brought about improvement in all medical establishments under him for which he was awarded the prestigious AVSM by the President of India.

Even after retirement, he worked tirelessly for the masses. Establishment of a modern Physiotherapy Department by him at Sector 34 Gurdwara Sahib was a boon for many. He would visit the Gurdwara Sahib’s dispensary and Veterans Polyclinic every Tuesday and Wednesday, respectively, and offer free consultation and services. For his dedicated service to humanity, it was decided to institute a “Bhai Kanhaiya Award”, with him being its first awardee.

He was an outstanding Orator and would often be invited by various gurdwaras, organisations and universities. His vast knowledge on Medical, religious, historical and miscellaneous subjects was amazing. He wrote extensively for various national dailies and magazines. His contribution to the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies* shall always be valued high.

A person well-versed in English, Punjabi, Urdu and Persian poetry, he was at home in India and abroad. He maintained an aesthetic task and sense of humour, and enjoyed conversation on a variety of subjects, and could convince all sections of society to his view point. In brief, he was a perfect example of a ‘Saint Soldier’ and always kept himself in *Charbdi Kala*. He always followed the dictum – service before self.

A multi-faceted man, he had a very jovial disposition. Infact during lighter moments, we would tease him on his average looks and short stature. He would promptly quip – So what if I am not tall – atleast I am dark and handsome ! So I qualify in two out of the three qualities required for a good looking man. Once while playing a table tennis match, he defeated his far superior opponent and won the tournament – merely by convincing him that he was better. Such was his confidence! Dedicated to honesty and sincerity, such people form the bedrock of civilization, the backbone of the Sikh fraternity.

“Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And departing, leave behind us,
Footprints on the sands of time.”

□

ATTACKING THE ICONOGRAPHY OF SIKH PANTH

BHUPINDER SINGH MAHAL*

In mid-December of last year, hundreds of Sikhs circled the Birmingham Repertory Theatre to protest the showing of the controversial play *Bebzti* (dishonour) on the grounds that it portrayed sexual abuse in a Gurudwara. Police were called. And, in the ensuing scuffle with the policemen a handful of protesters were arrested.

What piqued the demonstrators was not so much the story line as it was the locale of the drama. Central to the plot is the sexual assault on a 33-year old spinster in a Gurudwara by an elderly official of the temple, with the script calling for the congregational ‘Ardas’ (closing prayer) to drown out the woman’s protests. The plot thickens with the shocking revelation that the rape victim was aware of the homosexual orientation of the rapist.

Death threats impelled the author, Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti, a Sikh herself, to go in hiding, who, throwing caution to the wind, countered the protests by releasing to the press a copy of her polemical introduction to the play. In the foreword, Bhatti admits her drama is intended to be provocative and relevant by addressing “the simple Sikh principles of equality, compassion and modesty (that) are sometimes discarded in favour of outward appearance, wealth and the quest for power.”¹ In her statement to the press – in what can only be construed as a wanton disregard for the feelings of Sikh community – she added, “But perhaps those who are affronted by the menace of dialogue and discussion need to be offended”.

For months Sikh leaders and elders, including Sewa Singh Mandla, Chair of the Council of Sikh Gurudwaras in Birmingham (UK), had remonstrated with the organisers that the setting of the heinous crime

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in the inner sanctum of a Gurudwara was bound to inflame religious passions. The organisers dismissed the communal concerns, insisting that the play is a work of fiction depicting fallibility of human nature and in no way a reflection of Sikh faith.

Yasmin Wilde, who played the lead role of Min, the rape victim, believes it is “a mistake to consult because it makes people think that they have a voice in the creative process”.² She was highly critical of the organisers for caving in to communal pressure by staging a dress rehearsal before Sikh leaders that resulted in some changes in the script.

To understand the swirling controversy, one must first deconstruct the play into its constituent elements: a rare visit by a spinster to the Gurudwara for matrimonial purposes; an elderly dignitary with a record of sexual assaults and one who has been outed; the rape itself; Gurudwara as the locale of the assault; the day and the particular time in the day of the carnal violence points to round noon Sunday, by virtue of the synchronization of the carnal violence with the congregational prayers (*Ardas*) customarily held at that time; the language of the play is not emblematic of the socio-cultural norms of the principal characters.

The Sikh community was not unsettled by the sexual assault or depicting of the assailant as a temple dignitary. It was the staging of the rape in a Gurudwara that was to provoke their outrage as this was in their mind’s eye an intentional defilement of the House of Guru.

Addressing whether the theme of the play really demeans a Gurudwara, IJ Singh and Ravinder Singh write, “True, we wish violence and abuse should never happen, whether inside gurdwaras or anywhere else. But it does happen, does it not? Gurdwara personnel are only too human (like the rest of us) and subject to the same failings”; and, therefore, “The notion that a Sikh gurdwara could be the venue for sexual exploitation and violence, while heinous and offensive, cannot be swept under the rug”.³

There is no denying that “violence and abuse” does happen in a Gurudwara but such episodic outbursts have as their objective gaining control of temple affairs. In fact, there is no record of any case of rape in a temple to be found in the annals of religious history. No book, fictional or otherwise, has as its central theme an incident of violent rape during religious service in a church, mosque, synagogue,

gurudwara or other place of worship.

As proof of sex in a place of worship, I J Singh and Ravinder Singh ask the reader to “consider the painful process of long denial and reluctant acknowledgment of sexual molestation of children within the Roman Catholic Churches that occurred over the past many decades”.

These shenanigans exposed in the Roman Catholic Churches have no parallel and are simply a red herring. Agreed, sexual abuse is fairly prevalent among the Christian clergy; and, it spares no gender. But it is the rectory, vestry or the parsonage that is the usual place of tryst and not the sanctuary or the chapel. In the case of sexual relationship between priest and a woman, it is basically one between consenting adults, morally wrong but not a criminal conduct. The most sensational of the widespread sex abuse (pedophilia) involves young boys. The venue for pedophilia, that is child molestation, is usually the dormitory or the private quarters and there are no recorded incidents of the occurrence of such crimes during congregational service. Except in a handful of cases, the guilty clergy was defrocked and the church ordered to make reparation to the victims.

The most celebrated crime in church history is the fatal stabbing of Thomas Beckett, Archbishop of Canterbury, at the altar of the cathedral. It was a crime carried out to please Henry II, a king who was determined to extend his court's jurisdiction over the clergy. Years later, the King relented, doing his penance at the cathedral by walking barefoot while dozens of monks flagellated him with branches.

Though highly unlikely, murder may happen in a holy place while services are in progress, but a brutal rape is unthinkable and far-fetched. That is why the staging of the sexual assault against the backdrop of the temple challenges credulity; and, enacting such a sinful act in a Gurudwara smacks of a deliberate attempt to strike at the heart of the iconography of Sikh faith. In his incisive article in *The Guardian*, Dr Jasdev Singh Rai, director of the Sikh Human Rights Group, writes, “For the Sikhs, the Guru Granth Sahib, the text in complete form, is sacred. The Granth Sahib is the embodiment of the Sikh Gurus and is treated as our living spiritual guide. The gurdwara is where the Guru is in residence and, therefore, has a different significance than a synagogue, a church or a mosque. The Sikhs zealously maintain the sanctity of the Guru Granth Sahib while being happy to engage with

criticism of other aspects of our religion.”⁴

What prompted Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti to debase the hallowed ground, since doing so added little or nothing to her intended message of the helplessness of a rape victim at the hands of a powerful religious leader. How an imbalance of power panders to the hubris may have as easily been illustrated within the precincts of the Gurudwara on a day other than the day of worship. To feature a scene in which the stirring rendition of the congregational prayer “Ardas” muffles the rising crescendo of victim’s pleas appears not only to cast the temple as a silent witness to a heinous crime but also to convey an image that it offers no refuge to a woman in distress. It was this implicit complicity that made the blood boil, in Dr Rai’s words: “It was not the substance or message of her play that invoked the wrath of so many Sikhs, but the deliberate, sensational and offensive use of sacred icons.”⁵

Would the case for sexual assault by an authoritative priestly figure been less persuasive or emotive if it was to happen in a place other than the sanctuary of the temple? Highly improbable, and yet the plot made the locale more crucial than the rape itself. Placing the temple in the centre of the theme was gratuitous and intended to demolish Sikhdom’s most cherished religious icon.

Such heedless implication of the temple as an accessory to a sexual assault is shameful and borders on the mischief. To deflect mounting criticism, Bhatti and her supporters, countered the pandemonium, cleverly, by finding shelter in her right to freely express ideas.

However, protection of free expression is not a license to incite. Freedom of speech doesn’t mean that anything goes. Even though USA was the first nation to enshrine this right in the First Amendment to its Constitution, a right that is nowadays used as a litmus test to the existence of democracy, US Congress has gradually circumscribed this immunity in the larger interest of public good.

For example, Hate Crimes Prevention Act 2003 recognizes that “the incidence of violence motivated by the actual or perceived race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender or disability of the victim poses a serious national problem” and provides appropriate sentencing guidelines. Similarly, Australia’s Racial Hatred Act 1995 defines unlawful behaviour “as public acts based on the race, colour, national or ethnic origin of a person or group of people

which are likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate.” Equally blunt is the Canadian law section 319 Outlawing Inciting Group Hatred that states: “Every one who, by communicating statements in a public place, incites hatred against any identifiable group where such incitement is likely to lead to a breach of the peace is guilty of (a) an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years; or (b) an offence punishable on summary conviction.”

While championing the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Article 29 (2) of UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, too, places a curb “for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.”

Ernst Zundel, the largest distributor of neo-Nazi propaganda and memorabilia in North America, who gained notoriety for debunking the Holocaust, was tried under Canadian hate laws and denied the defence of freedom of expression. He is embroiled in a lengthy fight over his deportation.

Inciting religious hatred is to be made a criminal offence under plans unveiled by UK’s Home Secretary David Blunkett in order to tackle religious extremists who preach against other religions. Meanwhile the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, Vincent Nichols, said the play was offensive to people of all faiths adding: “Such a deliberate, even if fictional, violation of the sacred place of the Sikh religion demeans the sacred places of every religion. People of all faiths, therefore, will be offended by this presentation.”⁶

Speaking in a debate in the House of Lords, former Commons Speaker Lord Weatherill, a practising Anglican said, “I fully understand the Sikh community’s distress and anger about that play which is on in Birmingham. I hope it has been stopped.”⁷ While acknowledging “total” commitment to freedom of speech, Lord Ahmed, Labour’s peer, felt that nonetheless any such freedom “has to be balanced with freedom of responsibility”; adding, “Although I condemn violence and physical attacks by any individual or group, I can understand the feelings of the Sikh community in objecting strongly to the fact that a place of worship is depicted as a place where sex, homosexuality and violence occurs.” In answer to a question by Neil Burnley in live interactive

forum, Lord Bikhu Parekh, a Labour member of the House of Lords and race adviser, felt that “laws do really affect the way we behave towards each other as well as the way we see each other. This is why race relations legislation has been so effective in reducing racial discrimination.”

Bhatti claims that her play is designed to unmask social injustice and hypocrisy and provide a platform that “allows me to create characters, stories, a world in which I, as an artist, can play and entertain and generate debate.” It is one thing “to create characters (and) stories” another to meld the characters into the storyline that convincingly mirror real life. Authenticity has to be the overarching prerequisite. And, even on this critical element, Bhatti fails.

Her failure manifests itself in both the language and the phrasing of the dialogue. The play that is centred around a Sikh culture must necessarily reflect the attitudes, etiquette, nuances and, most important, the idiom of the people. These qualities require to be scrupulously observed even if translated into English.

Take, for example, the particular sequence of dialogue with the intended victim in which the arch-villain says, “You remind me of him... you remind me of my Tej.. he.. he used to kiss me.. on the lips... hard... so f***** hard.” A little later he admits, “There have been many lovers in my life... but none like my Tej...I loved him so f***** much... If only I could feel him... possess him... Just one more time...”⁸

These sentences reveal a hotchpotch of absurdities. Not only does the man scheming the rape declare his homosexual propensity to his intended victim but simultaneously reveal that her father, now deceased, was the sex partner. The likelihood of an aging Sikh man ‘outing’ himself to a much younger spinster is zero, since it goes against the grain of his traditional ideas so typical of a patriarchal society. Then, again, making one believe that the Anglo-Saxon four-letter word is part of the vocabulary of a middle-aged Sikh religious leader just won’t wash.

During an encounter with two other women, the mother of the rape victim interrupts her daughter, “Not now ducks, we’re talking about you, not to you!” and a few moments later says, “For shitter’s sake....stupid girl!”

Words like “ducks” and “shitter” belong to the Cockney slang and to suggest they are part of the jargon of a middle-aged Sikh woman and used by a mother in the presence of her daughter is to let one’s imagination run wild. That is not to say that Sikh men or women are not foul-mouthed. Punjabi cuss words involve kith and kin whereas Anglo-Saxon expletives involve sex, anatomy or bathroom. Every culture has its own distinctive swear words, foul invective and four-letter words; and, the obscenities that are part of the vernacular of a Punjabi-Sikh are totally different from those of an Anglo-Saxon. The language of the play fails to reflect this reality.

The author who set out to explore the “fallibility of human nature and the injustice and hypocrisy that exists in the real world” has fallen prey to pretence and cultural chicanery herself. Like Salman Rushdie before her, whose deliberate decision to give the whores of the novel the same names as those of Prophet Mohammed’s wives – whom Muslims revere as “mothers” – was to outrage Muslims all over the world, so does Bhatti’s senseless and gratuitous staging of an evil crime in a Sikh temple lacerate Sikh psyche.

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## GLIMPSES OF A SCIENTIFIC VISION IN GURU GRANTH SAHIB

HARDEV SINGH\*

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### INTRODUCTION

Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs, is a unique creation in the history of world religions as it contains the sacred writings of Sikh Gurus and more than 30 saints and bards belonging to different religious and cultural traditions of India, including Bhagat Namdev from the Maharashtra region. It is highly desirable to bring into focus both the secular and scientific characteristics of Guru Granth Sahib during the fourth centennial celebrations of its compilation by Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs. An attempt has been made to present some glimpses of a scientific vision in Guru Granth Sahib in this paper.

The Sikh religion, founded by Guru Nanak during the fifteenth century in India, has some parallelism with Renaissance and Reformation movements in Europe. Guru Nanak challenged the orthodox ideas of Indian society based on Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam. The Sikh philosophy as expounded in Guru Granth Sahib is unique in its epistemology. It rejects myths, rituals and dogmas; as a consequence, it has a universal appeal for humankind, irrespective of its religious and cultural affiliations. In the holistic vision of Guru Granth Sahib, God, nature and man are integrally bound to each other. According to Rev H L Bradshaw, "Sikh religion is a universal world faith, a message for all men. The religion preached by Guru Nanak is the faith of the New Age. The other religions contain the truth, but

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the Sikh religion contains the fullness of truth.”

The spiritual/mystical vision in Guru Granth Sahib is compatible with modern science in its approach to cosmology, nature of reality, relation of microcosm to macrocosm, and consciousness. Guru Granth Sahib advocates dual nature of reality, both transcendental and immanent at the same time. God himself transforms into creation, changing his *nirguna* form (energetic state) to *sarguna* form (material state). Space and time were created at the epoch of Big-Bang and creation process has occurred several times. The universe was created out of *śūnya* phase (cosmic void) billions of years ago. There are millions and billions of stars, solar systems and galaxies in the universe and it is almost impossible and beyond human reason to account for the whole system.

#### CONCEPT OF REALITY IN GURU GRANTH SAHIB

The concept of ultimate reality propounded by Guru Nanak in Guru Granth Sahib is most scientific; as a consequence, it is also dynamic and precise. Reality is one and non-dual. Hence, the Guru Granth Sahib *Manglacharan*<sup>1</sup> commences with the numeral 1 before ‘Open Oora’, which represents Existence or Being. It is followed by *Satt Naam* which means the supreme reality is True and it is manifested in Truth, Existence and Being. The other features of reality are its transcendence and immanence, creator person, without fear or hatred, beyond time and space, self-existent, transcendental cosmic spirit made manifest by grace of the Guru. Thus, Guru Nanak projects the nature, potentialities and characteristics of supreme reality or God of his vision. This concept of reality is unique, scientific and revolutionary and it differs in its connotation from the Vedantic concept.

Reality or God was in existence before the commencement of creation and time (*yugas*) during the epoch of cosmic void. God existed at the beginning of this universe, i.e., creation of space and time. God exists now and will also exist in the future (even when the universe is annihilated). The Sikh philosophy dialectically unites the ideas of God and the world. Transcendence shows that God is prior to and distinct from the world. Immanence of God represents God’s connection with the world. Guru Angad defines the transcendental nature of reality<sup>2</sup>: “*In this realm, one sees but without the eyes; one listens but*

*without the ears, one walks but without the feet; one works but without the hands; one speaks but without the tongue; thus attaining life in death. O Nanak, one meets the God after realization of the divine law."*

Guru Nanak discards the Vedantic concept of reality which considers this universe as an illusion or *Maya*. His view-point expressed in Guru Granth Sahib is<sup>3</sup>: "*Real are Thy Continents; Real is the Universe; Real are these forms and material objects; Thy doings are real, O Lord.*" Truth is considered supreme in all religions but Guru Granth Sahib lays more stress on truthful living than on truth<sup>4</sup>: "*Truth is high but higher still is truthful living*". Hence the Sikh religion does not condemn the worldly life as *maya* (illusion). Reality is perceived in a holistic mode in both microcosm and macrocosm.

Guru Nanak has identified the manifest reality with nature<sup>5</sup>: "*Nanak, the beneficent Lord alone is true, and He is revealed through His nature.*" The description of nature by Guru Nanak in *Asa-di-Var*<sup>6</sup> is a new dimension in the history of religious thought. In a way, scientific study of nature is sanctioned in Guru Granth Sahib: "*All that is visible is His Nature; All that is heard too is His nature.... In the nether regions and skies is the manifestation of His nature; Of His nature are all the manifestations.*"

To sum up, the concept of supreme reality as presented in Guru Granth Sahib is unique, scientific and revolutionary. It is not a mere abstraction. Its realization is possible through the practice of *Sabd* and *Naam*. Guru Nanak was blessed with the vision of God or Reality in Nature<sup>7</sup>: "*The Guru hath revealed the Lord's presence to Nanak in the three worlds; in the woods, waters and over the earth.*"

### CONCEPT OF *SŪNYA* IN GURU GRANTH SAHIB

We find an echo of *sūnyata* philosophy of Buddhism in Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Nanak's dialogue with Siddhas is recorded in Guru Granth Sahib as Siddh-Goshit which is in the form of a religious debate concerning the origin of cosmos, *sūnya*, liberation (*mukti*) and various other issues. Guru Nanak rejected the Hatha-Yoga cult of Siddhas and condemned the path of renunciation of the world followed by them. He advocated adoption of house-holder's life in this world and preached Sahaj-Yoga or Nam-Yoga, the Sikh way of life.

The term '*sūnya*' occurs in Siddh-Goshit<sup>8</sup> when Siddhas pose a

question to Guru Nanak:

Q: - What about the pre-cosmos state? Prior to it where the Lord of void abide?

A: - The very thought of the pre-cosmos state lands one in a state of wonder. In the profound stillness of the *sūnya*, the formless one pervaded in continuum then.

Various interpretations of *sūnya* doctrine exist in Guru Granth Sahib. *Sūnya* is not equated with void or emptiness in Guru Granth Sahib. Rather, it represents the state of equipoise where Absolute Lord exists in primordial trance called *sūnya samaadhi*<sup>9</sup>:

The Yogi, the Primal Lord, sat within the celestial sphere of deepest trance (*samaadhi*).

In Guru Granth Sahib, Absolute Reality or God is both immanent and transcendental<sup>10</sup>. He is formless, attributeless and hence beyond description:

*He possesses all qualities, He transcends all qualities;*

*He is the formless Lord; He Himself is in Primal trance (samaadhi).*

In consonance with the Buddhist philosophy of *sūnyata*, subject-object differentiation or concept of duality does not exist in the *sūnya* state as enunciated by saint Kabir in Guru Granth Sahib<sup>11</sup>:

*No life or death, no pain or pleasure is felt there.*

*There is only the primal trance of samaadhi, and hence no duality.*

Guru Arjun, the fifth Nanak, describes the primordial trance of God before the creation process starts as a manifestation of God<sup>12</sup>:

*For countless days, He remained invisible.*

*For countless days, He remained absorbed in sūnya*

*For countless days, there was utter darkness, and*

*Then the Creator revealed Himself.*

However, the most beautiful elaboration of *sūnya* doctrine is given by Guru Nanak in his composition *Maru Solbe* in Guru Granth Sahib<sup>13</sup>. *Sūnya* is compared to a primal void where God exists in His full effulgence. The creation appears when God wills out of this *sūnya* phase. All the seventeen stanzas of seventeenth *Solbe* give us a vivid description of *sūnya* and there is no parallel in Indian religious literature to the spiritual vision of Guru Nanak. We may quote only a few reflections from this vision:

In the *sūnya* (Primal void), the infinite Lord assumed His Power.

He Himself is unattached, infinite and incomparable.  
 From the *śūnya*, He created air and water.  
 He created universe and the man in the fortress of body.  
 From this *śūnya*, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva issued forth.  
 From this *śūnya*, the moon, the sun and the earth were created.  
 They were created from *śūnya*, and they will merge into the *śūnya*.  
 From the *śūnya*, the five elements became manifest.

When Siddhas ask Guru Nanak: “Who are they, who are attuned to this Absolute *śūnya*”? Guru Nanak answers: “They are the *Gurmukhs* (Guru-oriented), like the God, from whom they originated.” While *śūnya* doctrine was used to promote renunciation and monasticism by its Buddhist advocates known as *śūnyavadins*, Guru Nanak condemned it and advocated the life style of a *Gurmukh*, the house-holder who faces the challenges of worldly life. Thus, theoretical implications of *śūnya* doctrine may be identical in both Buddhism and Sikhism, but empirical meanings are different in the two systems.

#### COSMOLOGICAL IDEAS IN GURU GRANTH SAHIB

Cosmological ideas as enunciated in Guru Granth Sahib have been found to be most scientific and compatible with the modern cosmological theories of science. In *Japuji*, Guru Nanak sums up his ideas about creation of the Universe, which he elaborates further in the most precise and scientific manner in the *Raga Maru Solhe* in Guru Granth Sahib. The creation hypothesis is summed up as follows by Guru Nanak<sup>14</sup>:

*‘God created the Universe by uttering a word.’*

Thus the problem of ‘singularity’ faced by the Big-Bang model of the Universe is solved by the Guru by bringing in God as the Creator of the Universe. Once this riddle is solved, the sequence of creation, its epoch and extant is described in Guru Granth Sahib in a most rational manner. Guru Nanak poses the next question in *Japuji*<sup>15</sup>:

*What was the time and the moment  
 The day and the month,  
 When the world was created?*

In the next stanza, Guru Nanak provides the answer<sup>16</sup>:

*Neither the Pundit can find this date  
 By looking through the Purana texts,*

*Nor can the Qazi tell from the Koran,  
Neither the Yogi nor any one else knows  
The day, week, season or month of creation,  
The Creator who creates the World  
He alone knows the time'*

Guru Nanak does not want to formulate any hypothesis based on false assumptions and leaves this question open. The creation process is started under the command of God, the Creator of the Universe. The Guru envisages the creation of the Universe out of *sūnya* which is devoid of matter but not of energy. Hence, a beautiful analogy with quantum concept of creation out of nothing, as a vacuum fluctuation, is established in *Raga Maru Solbe*<sup>17</sup>:

*'The Creator was all alone,  
He created the air, water, earth and sky;  
Even the sun and moon from this sūnya.'*

This wonderful drama of creation is elucidated further by Guru Nanak in his mystic reverie. Surprisingly, there is a perfect correspondence between the epoch of 'Big-Bang' and the creation out of *sūnya* phase as enunciated in *Maru Solbe*, the most beautiful hymn on Sikh cosmology<sup>18</sup>:

*'For billions of years, there was nothing but utter darkness. There was neither day nor night, nor moon, nor sun, but the Lord alone sat in profound trance. Neither there was creation, nor air, nor water. There were no continents, nor underworlds, nor seven oceans nor rivers, or the flowing water. There was neither death, nor time. There was no Brahma, nor Vishnu or Shiva.*

*When He so willed, He created the world and supported the firmament without support. He created Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and extended the love of mammon. He founded the continents, solar systems and underworlds, and from the Absolute self, He became manifest."*

Guru Arjun Dev describes in *Sukhmani* the myriad forms of creation<sup>19</sup>:

*"There are millions and millions of galaxies and solar systems in the universe. The phenomenon of creation has occurred so many times. But the one Lord remains for ever and ever."*

The riddle of creation of the universe will remain an enigma for

cosmologists and there is no final word yet in cosmology. About the present theories and models, we may conclude with a quotation from *Benti Chaupai* in *Dasam Granth*<sup>20</sup>:

“Everyone explains the creation process according to his intellect,  
But no one can tell, O Lord,  
How you first created the universe”

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ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥
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ਅਖੀ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਵੇਖਣਾ ਵਿਣੁ ਕੰਨਾ ਸੁਨਣਾ ॥ ਪੈਰਾ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਚਲਣਾ ਵਿਣੁ ਹਥਾ ਕਰਣਾ ॥ ਜੀਭੈ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਬੋਲਣਾ ਇਉ ਜੀਵਤ ਮਰਣਾ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣਿ ਕੈ ਤਉ ਖਸਮੈ ਮਿਲਣਾ ॥
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ਸਚੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਖੰਡ ਸਚੇ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡ ॥ ਸਚੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਲੋਅ ਸਚੇ ਆਕਾਰ ॥
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ਆਦਿ ਕਉ ਕਵਨੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ਕਥੀਅਲੇ ਸੁੰਨ ਕਹਾ ਘਰ ਵਾਸੇ ॥
9. Guru Granth Sahib, M 1, p. 685.
ਸੁੰਨ ਮੰਡਲ ਇਕੁ ਜੋਗੀ ਬੈਸੇ ॥
10. Guru Granth Sahib, M 5, p. 290.
ਸਰਗੁਨ ਨਿਰਗੁਨ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧੀ ਆਪਿ ॥
ਆਪਨ ਕੀਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਫਿਰਿ ਜਾਪਿ ॥
11. Guru Granth Sahib, Kabir, p. 333.
ਜੀਵਨ ਮਿਰਤੁ ਨ ਦੁਖੁ ਸੁਖੁ ਬਿਆਪੈ ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧਿ ਦੇਉ ਤਹ ਨਾਹੀ ॥
12. Guru Granth Sahib, M. 5, p. 1081.

- ਕੇਤਤਿਆ ਦਿਨ ਗੁਪਤੁ ਕਹਾਇਆ ॥
 ਕੇਤਤਿਆ ਦਿਨ ਸੁੰਨਿ ਸਮਾਇਆ ॥
 ਕੇਤਤਿਆ ਦਿਨ ਧੰਧੁਕਾਰਾ ਆਪੇ ਕਰਤਾ ਪਰਗਟਾ ॥
13. Guru Granth Sahib, M1, p. 1037-1038.
 ਸੁੰਨ ਕਲਾ ਅਪਰੰਪਰਿ ਧਾਰੀ ॥
 ਆਪਿ ਨਿਰਾਲਮੁ ਅਪਰ ਅਪਾਰੀ ॥
 ਆਪੇ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖੈ ਸੁੰਨਹੁ ਸੁੰਨੁ ਉਪਾਇਦਾ ॥ ੧ ॥...
 ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਸੁੰਨੈ ਤੇ ਸਾਜੇ ॥ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਉਪਾਇ ਕਾਇਆ ਗੜ ਰਾਜੇ ॥
 ਅਗਨਿ ਪਾਣੀ ਜੀਉ ਜੋਤਿ ਤੁਮਾਰੀ ਸੁੰਨੈ ਕਲਾ ਰਹਾਇਦਾ ॥ ੨ ॥
 ਸੁੰਨਹੁ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਮਹੇਸੁ ਉਪਾਏ ॥ ਸੁੰਨੈ ਵਰਤੇ ਜੁਗ ਸਬਾਏ ॥
 ਇਸੁ ਪਦ ਵੀਚਾਰੇ ਸੋ ਜਨੁ ਪੂਰਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਮਿਲੀਐ ਭਰਮੁ ਚੁਕਾਇਦਾ ॥ ੩ ॥
 ਤਿਤੁ ਸਤ ਸਰਿ ਮਨੁਆ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਵੈ ਫਿਰਿ ਬਾਹੁੜਿ ਜੋਨਿ ਨ ਪਾਇਦਾ ॥ ੪ ॥
 ਸੁੰਨਹੁ ਚੰਦੁ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਗੈਣਾਰੇ ॥ ਤਿਸ ਕੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਤ੍ਰਿਭਵਣ ਸਾਰੇ ॥
 ਸੁੰਨੈ ਅਲਖ ਅਪਾਰ ਨਿਰਾਲਮੁ ਸੁੰਨੈ ਤਾੜੀ ਲਾਇਦਾ ॥
14. Guru Granth Sahib, M1, p.3.
 ਕੀਤਾ ਪਸਾਉ ਏਕੋ ਕਵਾਉ ॥
15. Guru Granth Sahib, M1, p. 4.
 ਕਵਣੁ ਸੁ ਵੇਲਾ ਵਖਤੁ ਕਵਣੁ ਕਵਣੁ ਬਿਤਿ ਕਵਣੁ ਵਾਰੁ ॥
 ਕਵਣਿ ਸਿ ਰੁਤੀ ਮਾਹੁ ਕਵਣੁ ਜਿਤੁ ਹੋਆ ਆਕਾਰੁ ॥
16. Guru Granth Sahib, M1, p. 4.
 ਵਖਤੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਓ ਕਾਦੀਆ ਜਿ ਲਿਖਨਿ ਲੇਖੁ ਕਰਾਣੁ ॥
 ਬਿਤਿ ਵਾਰੁ ਨਾ ਜੋਗੀ ਜਾਣੈ ਰੁਤਿ ਮਾਹੁ ਨਾ ਕੋਈ ॥
 ਜਾ ਕਰਤਾ ਸਿਰਠੀ ਕਉ ਸਾਜੇ ਆਪੇ ਜਾਣੈ ਸੋਈ ॥
17. Guru Granth Sahib, M1, p.1037.
 ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਸੁੰਨੈ ਤੇ ਸਾਜੇ ॥
 ਸੁੰਨਹੁ ਚੰਦੁ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਗੈਣਾਰੇ ॥
18. Guru Granth Sahib, M1, p.1035.
 ਅਰਬਦ ਨਰਬਦ ਧੰਧੁਕਾਰਾ ॥ ਧਰਣਿ ਨ ਗਗਨਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਅਪਾਰਾ ॥
 ਨਾ ਦਿਨੁ ਰੈਨਿ ਨ ਚੰਦੁ ਨ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧਿ ਲਗਾਇਦਾ ॥ ੧ ॥
 ਖਾਣੀ ਨ ਬਾਣੀ ਪਉਣੁ ਨ ਪਾਣੀ ॥ ਓਪਤਿ ਖਪਤਿ ਨ ਆਵਣ ਜਾਣੀ ॥
 ਖੰਡ ਪਤਾਲ ਸਪਤ ਨਹੀ ਸਾਗਰ ਨਦੀ ਨ ਨੀਰੁ ਵਹਾਇਦਾ ॥ ੨ ॥
 ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਮਹੇਸੁ ਉਪਾਏ ਮਾਇਆ ਮੋਹੁ ਵਧਾਇਦਾ ॥ ੧੪ ॥
 ਵਿਰਲੇ ਕਉ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੁ ਸੁਣਾਇਆ ॥ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖੈ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਸਬਾਇਆ ॥
 ਖੰਡ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡ ਪਾਤਾਲ ਅਰੰਭੇ ਗੁਪਤਹੁ ਪਰਗਟੀ ਆਇਦਾ ॥ ੧੫ ॥
19. Guru Granth Sahib, M5, p.276.
 ਕਈ ਕੋਟਿ ਖਾਣੀ ਅਰੁ ਖੰਡ ॥ ਕਈ ਕੋਟਿ ਅਕਾਸ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡ ॥
 ਕਈ ਕੋਟਿ ਹੋਏ ਅਵਤਾਰ ॥ ਕਈ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਕੀਨੇ ਬਿਸਥਾਰ ॥
 ਕਈ ਬਾਰ ਪਸਰਿਓ ਪਾਸਾਰ ॥ ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਇਕੁ ਏਕੰਕਾਰ ॥
20. *Dasam Granth*, Bhai Chatar Singh-Jiwan Singh, Amritsar, 1902, p.1387.

WAY TO ENJOY ETERNAL BLISS

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Beginning of the present century witnessed an important observation attributed to the eminent scholars gathered under the auspices of the UNESCO, who proclaimed that the twentieth century was the century of the political and economic refugees; and the twenty first century would be a century of spiritual refugees. Rightly, we are trying to teach our children to fly in the air like birds and swim in the water like fish, but how to live on earth like human beings is not included in our core curriculum. The phenomenal growth in knowledge is not matched by a commensurate growth in wisdom which lies in the cultivation of humanizing impulses. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, and power without conscience.

Noting the growing popularity of religious books and personal spiritual advisers, I assume there is a hunger for spirituality all over the globe. According to an estimate by Association of American Publishers, in the US \$1.3 billion worth of religious books sold last year was five times higher than sold in 1992. This sector has grown faster than any other. Many sites on the web are providing spiritual guidance online. Some sites encourage everyone to develop a personal relationship with God, no matter what their religion is. What's unique about some sites is that there are pages where you can actually pray. It needs to be believed that the UNESCO proclamation is fast becoming discernible and may become more pronounced in the ensuing years.

Instead of listing the numerous and diverse teachings of Guru Granth Sahib, I would wish to focus primarily on this aspect of spirituality in human life. In addition, it becomes all the more imperative today as the very word 'spirituality' is being used whimsically

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in different ways and sometimes most ridiculously and absurdly too. A glimpse at the internet selections on spirituality reveals that people in the West have started using the word 'Christian spirituality', 'Jewish spirituality' and the like. Religion was supposed to graduate to spirituality but here it is the reverse. Religion is being superimposed on spirituality.

Majority of the high-ups in the society, especially politicians, are now frequently appointing their spiritual advisors. Having met one such spiritual advisor from Leister, UK, I thought the man would be guiding on matters related to spirit, meditation or virtuous living. But disappointingly, he was chosen just to guide the Lord Mayor of Leister about different religious and ethnic communities in his constituency. Yes, here the duty of the spiritual advisor is to guide the politician how to garner votes during elections. Likewise, an endless array of deceptive and "spiritual-sounding" experiences are flourishing today. Some call it the new "pop spirituality", while a little of this is "feelings-based" and fits in well with the "feel good" longings of the 21st Century people.

Before proceeding further it will be worthwhile to define spirituality at least for the purpose of this paper. The word "spirituality" comes from the Latin *spiritus*. It is related to the Greek word, *pneuma*, too. It is also linked to the Hebrew *ruach*, which means breath, connoting that spirit is within us and among us like the air we breathe. To me, it is to know myself, exploring myself and getting intune with the super power – the Almighty – may be through meditation by serving the suffering humankind. In fact, life is a sacred and spiritual journey; all of us are sacred and spiritual beings. Human beings have been described as the elder brothers of the animals and the younger brothers of the gods. Civilization fulfils itself when they are elevated from, say, animality to spirituality. So, we need to search and strengthen the inherent divinity in the human race.

We must choose to embrace the perspective of cheerful living in the sacred place of our spirituality - the heart. Despite our religious or cultural preferences, Eternal-Everlasting Bliss (*Sada Vigas*²) is living with a compassionate and benevolent heart. When our actions – physical, mental or intellectual – are oriented to serve others, it becomes a worship of God. Nothing is as appealing as a cheerful

disposition. It puts a glow in our eyes, a smile on our face and spring in our walk. How Guru Granth Sahib and Bhagat Naamdev *ji* ordain us to lead cheerful, upbeat, purposeful life full of eternal, celestial, supreme, intuitive bliss — is the purpose of this attempt.

Meditation is normally considered as sitting and concentrating in a particular posture for a specific period of time during the day or night. Earlier, it was practised in a standing mode too, sometimes on one leg for hours and days together. But Gurbani does not endorse or advocate any such approach. Then what does it ordain? It commands us to be in tune with the Lord all the time. How is it possible? Practise meditation while walking, while moving, while working. Gurbani suggests that if our actions are virtuous and we remember Him all the time, we can achieve liberation even while laughing, playing, dressing and eating. This is, however, possible only after seeking guidance from the True Guru through whom one comes to know the Perfect Way.

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਭੋਟਿਐ ਪੂਰੀ ਹੋਵੈ ਜੁਗਤਿ ॥

ਹਸੰਦਿਆ ਖੇਲੰਦਿਆ ਪੈਨੰਦਿਆ ਖਾਵੰਦਿਆ ਵਿਚੇ ਹੋਵੈ ਮੁਕਤਿ ॥³

Bhagat Naamdev provides a number of illustrations. He states in *raag Ramkali* that a boy takes a piece of paper, cuts it and makes a kite, and flies it in the sky. While talking to his friends, he still keeps his attention on the kite string. In the same way, O Man! Pierce your heart / soul by the Name of the Lord, like the goldsmith, whose attention is held by his work. The young girl in the countryside carries pitchers and fills them with water. On her way back to home, she laughs, and plays, and talks with her friends, but keeps her attention focused on the pitchers of water on her head. Likewise, if a cow is let loose, out of the mansion of the ten gates, to graze in the field, it grazes up to five miles away, but keeps its attention focused on its calf. A child is laid down in the cradle, mother is at work, inside and outside, but she holds her child in her thoughts. Bhagat *ji* says:

ਆਨੀਲੇ ਕਾਗਦੁ ਕਾਟੀਲੇ ਗੁਡੀ ਆਕਾਸ ਮਧੇ ਭਰਮੀਅਲੇ ॥

ਪੰਚ ਜਨਾ ਸਿਉ ਬਾਤ ਬਤਾਊਆ ਚੀਤੁ ਸੁ ਡੋਰੀ ਰਾਖੀਅਲੇ ॥੧॥

ਮਨੁ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮਾ ਬੋਧੀਅਲੇ ॥ ਜੈਸੇ ਕਨਿਕ ਕਲਾ ਚਿਤੁ ਮਾਂਡੀਅਲੇ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

ਆਨੀਲੇ ਕੁੰਭੁ ਭਰਾਈਲੇ ਊਦਕ ਰਾਜ ਕੁਆਰਿ ਪੁਰੰਦਰੀਏ ॥

ਹਸਤ ਬਿਨੋਦ ਬੀਚਾਰ ਕਰਤੀ ਹੈ ਚੀਤੁ ਸੁ ਗਾਗਰਿ ਰਾਖੀਅਲੇ ॥੨॥

ਮੰਦਰੁ ਏਕੁ ਦੁਆਰ ਦਸ ਜਾ ਕੇ ਗਊ ਚਰਾਵਨ ਛਾਡੀਅਲੇ ॥

ਪਾਂਚ ਕੋਸ ਪਰ ਗਊ ਚਰਾਵਤ ਚੀਤੁ ਸੁ ਬਛਰਾ ਰਾਖੀਅਲੇ ॥੩॥

ਕਹਤ ਨਾਮਦੇਉ ਸੁਨਹੁ ਤਿਲੋਚਨ ਬਾਲਕੁ ਪਾਲਨ ਪਉਢੀਅਲੇ ॥
ਅੰਤਰਿ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਕਾਜ ਬਿਰੂਧੀ ਚੀਤੁ ਸੁ ਬਾਰਿਕ ਰਾਖੀਅਲੇ ॥⁴

So, Guru Granth Sahib's way is meditation during walk and work, meals, play, recreation and conversation and even sleep. One is tuned to the Lord all the 24 hours. Yes, it is during sleep also that one can meditate. All the times are good for meditation, all seasons are good and all days are auspicious for chanting His Name.

Today, we are evolving into a global community, but the universal outlook is still lacking. Guru Granth Sahib provides us a global perspective, which is profoundly needed, and it helps us to resolve all the conflicts peacefully. The West has been unable to meet the challenges because the political and social systems promote individualism. As a result of this situation, a spiritual vacuum has been created. Guru Granth Sahib can assist in filling this vacuum as spirituality has a collective approach. The whole gamut of the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib can be summed up as '*Kirat karo, Naam japo, Vand chhako*', i.e., "Meditate, work hard & share the earnings". The most important, initiative and vital step is to ask:

ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ॥
ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥⁵

that is, how can we become truthful? And how can the veil of illusion between man and God be torn away? Guru Nanak says, it is accepted since ages that one shall obey His Command, and walk in the Way of His Will to tear this veil of ignorance.

With due apology, even if someone does not subscribe to my views, I would go to the extent of saying that mere label of any particular religion does not help one to spiritually elevate oneself. One needs only to meditate and engage in some spiritual practice. It is a simple fact of experience that prayer transforms individuals, and individuals transform the world. What is more important is whether we follow the right path or not.

Crows are universally black. It is a metaphorical statement that bad people are bad no matter wherever one finds them. The whole essence of Gurbani teaching is touching this very aspect that human nature is the same worldwide; Gurbani strives and exhorts us to concentrate on and transform this nature. Man will have to understand that a paper can't wrap fire. Whatever we are doing under cover will

be exposed sooner or later. When we cannot find contentment in ourselves, it is useless to seek it elsewhere. How happy is he, born or taught, that serves not another's will, whose armour is his honest thought, and simple truth his utmost skill. The great lesson to be learned is that Happiness is within us. No passing amusement, no companionship, and no material possession can permanently satisfy mankind. We must hoard up our own strength and depend upon our own resources for amusement and pleasure. As Edward Young says, "No man ever found a happy life by chance, or yawned it into being with a wish; or with the snout of groveling appetite ever smelled it out, and grubbed it from the dirt. An art it is, and must be learned; and learned with unremitting effort, or be lost. True happiness resides in things unseen"⁶.

Gurbani guides: The greatest wealth is contentment. A God's NAME is better than riches. He has enough who is content. Contentment comes of the heart. Contentment consists not in heaping more fuel, but in taking away some fire. Contentment is the stone, which turns all it touches into gold; the poor man is rich with it and the rich man is poor without it. Better bring thy mind to thy condition than have thy condition brought to thy mind. Hope for the best, get ready for the worst, and then take what God chooses to send. Sadness and gladness succeed each other. He that sings on Friday will weep on Saturday. Sorrow treads upon the heels of mirth. Laugh before breakfast, you'll cry before supper. Learn Wisdom by the follies of others. It is easy to be Wise after the event. No man is Wise at all times. Every man is a Fool sometimes and none at all times.

Spirituality is beyond religious, cultural and national barriers. When the tongue sings the praise of the Lord, the ocean of virtues, peace, poise & delight well up in mind and all the sorrows flee away. One deems everything to be peace-bestowing, having realized the world preserver. Calmness and composure come to him. Stop manipulating. The more we manipulate, the more we complicate. He, whose mind is satiated, is rid of self-conceit, and he abandons violence and covetousness. Realize that in every heart, the Lord is contained. Troubles shall never befall on us if we harbour no evil towards anybody in our minds. Beware of greed. It is said that needs can be met, but greed can't. Guru Nanak Dev Ji says as the rabid dog runs & wanders

in ten (all) directions, similarly the greedy man heeds nothing & devours all what is eatable and non-eatable. Engrossed in ego, the world is degrading. It is in fact egotism where a man is overtaken by fear. It is a great malady & one who is engrossed in this, wails in birth and death. Harboursing evil towards another lands us in troubles. Let a bond of spiritual unity link the entire humankind. Look at humanity around us & touch another soul with goodness. If anything is sacred—it is the human being.

We need to ask ourselves how spiritual is our religion to us? Where is Religion's Spirituality? Not religion but religious dogmas lead to conflicts. The spirit of skepticism generated by science has resulted in an erosion of values. It is a paradox that religion is at once a cohesive and divisive force. One needs to go beyond the denominational religion to understand the connotational religion. One is most religious and spiritual when one is most human. A true religion is always sensitive to social needs. In other words, beliefs divide people and experience unites them. Religion-related violence is known at the global level. Conflicts about beliefs degenerate into harmful confrontations as people try to convince each other of the rightness of their own convictions. This is due to religion's loss of spirituality. The crux of the difference between religion and spirituality is: While each religion subscribes to a unique body of beliefs, spiritual experience is the same for all the people in all the true religions at all the times.

A similar experience occurs for many people in nature, love, meditation or a silent wordless prayer. Language is often inadequate to describe the feeling, which is why saints and sages resort to metaphors, but the experience is universal. When and why a religion loses its spiritual dimension, it has to do with complex cultural forces. Over the course of centuries, science separated the body from the soul, the matter from the spirit, and the heaven from the earth, seeming to promise health and happiness through technological advance in the physical world. As scientific materialism spread, spirituality waned, but people did not become happier. On the contrary, atheism and agnosticism have deprived life of meaning, and medicine is treating ill persons like machines in need of repairs. A religion's loss of spirituality is never total, however. Seeds always remain to be cultivated by a new generation of visionary leaders who rediscover the original

inspiration through, say, scriptural reading, practice of prayer or meditation, or a dream of some kind that sets the soul on fire. It is a universal spiritual law that epochs of loss give birth to epochs of gain.

Each religion should strive to recover its dormant spirituality. It may be by teaching and preaching spiritual practices such as yoga, devotional reading, chanting, study of scriptures or a spiritual journals. These exercises open doorways to profound self-knowledge and knowledge of the divine, to deep experiential awareness and behavioural change. They inevitably lead to compassion. When someone wants to develop spiritually, whether within religion or outside of it, the approach is the same: Spiritual practice carried out on a regular basis can bring about the new attitudes and values needed for ongoing growth.

Gurbani shows us the way to evolve a method to solve conflicts by rejecting revenge, aggression, and retaliation. It specifies that the devotees remain in bliss forever. Listening to the glories of God, their pain and sins are erased. Serving the True Guru brings a deep and profound peace, and one's desires are fulfilled. All other virtues follow. Abstinence, truthfulness and self-discipline are obtained, and the body is purified; the Lord comes to dwell within the soul. Such a person remains blissful forever, day and night. Meeting the Beloved, peace is found. Spirituality will help us in letting go of grudges. Probably none of us can deny that he or she remained fuming with a relative or a friend for a short or sometimes a very long duration. We nurse the feelings of being hurt or cheated. When we nurse a grudge, anger causes stress to the body. Spirituality makes us forgive others and we are in a position to take care of our future happiness by swapping the feelings of annoyance with the thoughts of goodwill. In addition, forgiving one when he or she seeks, is one thing, but I go beyond that to suggest *Auto-forgiveness*. What is this? This is forgiving one even without his or her asking for it. Yes! This may be difficult but not impossible.

Guru Granth Sahib argues : O man! O mortal!! You came here to earn a profit. What useless activities are you attached to? Arising each day, you cherish your body, but you are ignorant and not conscious of God. Let us focus our consciousness on the True Guru; we shall enjoy bliss forever and ever. Our life-night is coming to its end. The

Ambrosial Name of the Lord is a Gem, a Jewel, and a Pearl. The essence of intuitive peace and bliss is obtained by singing the Glories of God. The Lord bestows bliss upon His devotees, and gives them a seat in the eternal home. He does not give the sinners any stability or place of rest; He consigns them to the depths of hell. The Lord blesses His devotees with His Love; He sides with them and saves them.

Remain in bliss forever, and perform devotional worship, day and night. Hear and sing the Glorious Praises of the Lord. Everything, everywhere which He has given us is good. Bliss, joyful celebrations, wondrous plays and entertainment—whatever pleases Him, comes to pass. Meeting Him in the *Saadh Sangat*, i.e., Company of the Holy, celestial bliss is enjoyed. *Saadh Sangat*, is exceptionally a vital feature of the philosophy of Gurbani. It is in the company of holy persons that one is motivated to move ahead on the spiritual path. This company helps us in sharing our troubles. It is no disgrace or crime to need and seek sympathy and understanding of our friends. Rather, the *Saadh Sangat* has magical warmth that surpasses the power of medicines even. Let us be such a friend, and have such friends. People who isolate themselves are less healthy than those who surround themselves with good friends, as this serves as an exceptional support system. Friends and family members encourage each other to take care of themselves.

Eternal celestial bliss comes through the Guru's Teachings, by meditating continually on the Lord. We need to instil the belief that the Saviour Lord is the treasure of intuitive peace, poise and bliss. He shall save us in the end. Our pains, sufferings, fears and doubts will be erased. He Himself beholds, speaks and hears all. Meditating in remembrance on the Lord, all suffering is eradicated. It is not only the celestial bliss, pleasures or the greatest ecstasy, that / which are obtained by chanting and meditating in the company of the Holy, but, all sexual desires, anger, greed and ego are eradicated; all sinful mistakes are washed away. Man conquers the five tyrants and vanquishes the army of evil. God is the Embodiment of Supreme Bliss. It is not that we are to run after bliss all the time. No, it will come naturally. Yes, all of a sudden, we will realize that He is helping us. With us. Guiding us. Sleeping with us. Siding with us. We are at peace in our homes, and we are at peace while detached. In peace, our bodies' duality is

eliminated.

Guru Granth Sahib ordains us to become God-conscious. Such beings never perish; are steeped in humility and are delighted in doing good to others. They have no worldly entanglements, and continuously hold their wandering minds under control. They blossom in fruitfulness by renouncing ego. In the mind of the God-conscious being there is supreme bliss and in their homes there is everlasting bliss. They age carefree. In fact, the Gurbani says that a God-conscious being cannot be described in words. He is the helper of the helpless, and extends his hand to all. In a way he owns the entire creation.

Guru Granth Sahib also ordains us to dispel all types of fears and worries. A humble being, who performs devotional worship, is rid of all fear. The biggest fear is of death. But the nature of death which terrifies the entire world is revealed through Gurbani. It is very simple – just accept death and die with intuitive understanding. Then the mind is filled with bliss; doubts are eliminated, and one lives in ecstasy. Peace, poise, and immense bliss are obtained, when one becomes the dust of the feet of the humble servants of the Lord. All of one's affairs are perfectly resolved. The humble devotees of the Lord are forever in bliss; singing the Kirtan of the Lord's Praises, they blossom forth. They hold firm belief that whatever is to be, shall be. God pervades His creation; one gains, while another loses. Sometimes he blossoms in bliss, while at other times, he suffers in mourning. Sometimes he laughs, and sometimes he weeps. Sometimes he is filled with the filth of ego, while at other times, he washes it off in the *saadh sangat*, the Company of the Holy. No one can erase the actions of God.

When one attains bliss and blossoms forth in bliss, then what follows are wisdom, honor, wealth, peace and poise. Worldly affairs and wanderings cease. One is blissful forever, while walking in harmony with the Will of God. Meditating in remembrance of Him, sufferings are erased. Bliss wells up, and no disease is contracted. The inaudible sound current of bliss resounds and vibrates; the Lord hugs him in His embrace. When bliss ensues, pain is dispelled, and one sings the Lord's Praises. Let us be intoxicated with the celestial bliss. Bliss does not be only in riches and in flourishing conditions; even poverty is bliss, if God lives in the mind. It's all by singing the

glorious praises of the Lord. Bliss wells up, and we are friends with the *Saadh Sangat*. In *raag Gujri*, Bhagat Namdev ji says, “If You give me an empire, then what glory would be in it for me? If You made me beg for charity, what would it take away from me? Meditate and vibrate upon the Lord, O my mind, and you shall obtain the state of Nirvaanaa. As the path of a bird’s flight across the sky cannot be seen, and the path of a fish through the water cannot be seen; As the mirage leads one to mistake the sky for a pitcher filled with water — so is God, the Lord”.

Chanting the Name of the Lord, all doubts, fears and sufferings are dispelled. To Bhagat Naam Dev ji it is the highest religion. The Hindu worships at the temple, the Muslim at the mosque. Naam Dev serves that Lord, who is not limited to either the temple or the mosque. ਹਿੰਦੂ ਪੂਜੈ ਦੇਹੁਰਾ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣੁ ਮਸੀਤਿ ॥ ਨਾਮੇ ਸੋਈ ਸੇਵਿਆ ਜਹ ਦੇਹੁਰਾ ਨ ਮਸੀਤਿ ॥ “O my tongue, I will cut you into a hundred pieces, if you do not chant the Name of the Lord”. One who stays away from others’ wealth and others’ spouses — the Lord abides near that person. Those who do not meditate and vibrate on the Lord — I do not even want to see them. Those whose inner beings are not in harmony with the Lord, are nothing more than beasts.

In brief, for leading a life full of eternal bliss, we need to treat our homes as temples; treat our bodies as temples, gurudwaras, churches, mosques....As we don’t take filth to temples why take the filth of jealousy, egotism, drugs, intoxicants to our bodies. *Harmandir eh sareer hai*. Body is also *harmandir*, abode of God, take care of it. Reassess, Remember – matter does matter, but spirit matters more. Spiritualize every moment, action and feeling. All worldly prides are vain. What will happen if a few more people will know me, respect me or call me for lectures, papers? No, nothing will happen. Gurbani says the worldly praises are of no use. Burn them. *Duniya ki vadyain aggi seti jaal*. In fact, all that is required is to change the thinking pattern of our society and shape the behavior afresh.

O Holy gathering of scholars, let us resolve today to rejoice in the eternal bliss of the Word of the *Shabad* – as revealed in Guru Granth Sahib. Scholars are to show the right way to the society. Let us first enjoy our own kingdom of bliss. Enjoy the luxury of walking

and working in meditation. Last but not the least; I suppose it has become too sermonizing. Just think I am saying all this to myself only, not for you. You are already accomplished. I am left far behind on the spiritual path. Do pray for me to live up to the words I utter, I urge. Bliss, bliss, we are talking since long about it but it is not coming to me. Guru Granth Sahib says, “Bliss, bliss — everyone talks of bliss; bliss is known only through the Guru. Eternal bliss is known only through the Guru, when the Beloved Lord grants His Grace. Granting His Grace, He cuts away our sins; He blesses us with the healing ointment of spiritual wisdom. Those who eradicate attachment from within themselves, are adorned with the Shabad, Says Nanak, this alone is bliss — bliss which is known through the Guru.”⁷

In addition, let us do remember the words of Stephen R Covey : “We are not human beings on a spiritual journey. We are spiritual beings on a human journey.”⁸

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LINKING DIVERSE HEMISPHERES*
–EQUALITY AND FREEDOM IN THE POETRY OF
WALT WHITMAN AND SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB –

ISHMEET K CHAUDHRY

Creative Writers are quite often preoccupied with the basic issues of existence and its complexity. While experiencing pain, frustration, anguish and despair, human beings tend to question the role of freedom and choice in life. It is interesting to see the reverberations of these ideas in literatures belonging to diverse parts of the globe, belonging to different societies pertaining to different religions. The present paper proposes to correlate Walt Whitman's poetry and the Sikh scripture *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. Through his poetry, Walt Whitman seeks to explore freedom and perfection, which is sought only through the realization of the divine. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, as evident from the selected *shabads*, i.e., verses, also preaches that true liberty can be found through complete surrender to God. Similarly, the one who moves in the path of God finds perfection as well. The scripture also resolves the troubling enigmas of life through willing submission to the Ultimate.

Walt Whitman, the voice of democracy in America, has been amongst the great poets of the world. His belief in democracy is the outcome of the Declaration of the Independence of America and the Civil War; the impact it had on people in general. Whitman, in his poetry, captures the conflict and the struggle that America witnessed. It is not just a representation of the political struggle but a much larger, never ending, internal dilemma paralleled in human mind. Nevertheless, his poetry is about existence and matters concerning it.

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His poems are a voice not just of an extrinsic being but they are a voice of the intrinsic soul, which is all-inclusive. V.L. Parrington says that Whitman had “a mystic sense of the divine oneness of life that took his major postulates in golden hands and fused them into a single spiritual whole.”¹ Through his poetry, he wants to liberate the anguished soul and provide ‘freedom and extrication’ that become possible only through the union of the self with the divine. America, as a state, is an amalgam of various republics, a country, which is considered to be the most successful multicultural democratic state. What enthalls Whitman’s interest in America is the universal democratic vista where America functions as a symbol. He talks of America as an idea, which is absolutely ideal. Theoretically, it is an ideal, modern, democratic state where equality and freedom are valued the most. This nation represents all that man apparently aspires for. But deep inside, racism and materialism have corrupted it from within. In Whitman’s poetry whenever America as a state fails to meet the ideal expectations, the poet attempts to enhance the symbolic America within the human condition. He says:

I believe the main purport of these States, is to found a
superb friendship, exalt, previously unknown.
Because I perceive it waits, and has been always waiting,
latent in all men.²

Such is the culmination of the external state represented through America as a country and the internal state represented through mankind. Whitman’s poetry has a great mystic sense of the divine oneness of life through which he dreams to realize this perfection.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib echoes similar democratic notions and focuses on oneness of all human beings. Guru Arjun Dev compiled the scripture in 1604. The contents of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* contain compositions of six Gurus (Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amardas, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjun Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur), fifteen *Bhagats* (Jai Dev, Nam Dev, Trilochan, Parmanand, Sadna, Ramanand, Beni, Dhanna, Pipa, Sain, Kabir, Ravidas, Farid, Surdas, Bhikhan) and eleven *Bhatts* (Mathra, Jalap, Harbans, Salya, Bhikha, Bhal, Kalh Sahar, Nal, Kirat, Gayand, Sadrang). Not only does it offer a rich treasure of poetry/*shabads* written by *Gurus* and many medieval saints, *bhagats*, *sufis* and *bhatts*, it is also a valuable source of

their teachings as preserved and edited by the fifth Guru. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is an amalgam of different languages, texts, scriptures, religions and philosophies. It is also an embodiment of the spiritual, religious, cultural and social awareness. It is a volume of wisdom and spiritual philosophy full of secular, social and democratic values based on moral and social justice for the entire human race. The scripture focuses on a way of life. It describes the path to be followed by human beings to explore the reality of life.

Identity, i.e., the idea of the self, and the quest for meaning and purpose in life have been fundamental issues of philosophy. Self and existence have always been the key existential issues. Sartre asserts that 'Existence Precedes Essence.'³ This debate has always remained central to the philosophy of life. Existence is the real fact that 'we exist'. Existence ...always a being-in-the world, i.e., in a concrete and historically determinate situation that limits or conditions choice. Man is, therefore, called *Dasien* ('these beings') because he is defined by the fact that he exists, or is in the world and inhabits it.⁴

Essence, on the other hand, is the 'making of the self'. Whatever an individual makes of himself or develops into, is the essence of being. It is believed that a being cannot be developed or simply 'made' without existence, hence existence comes first. After a being is able to define existence, essence becomes predominating for him, as he considers the bodily existence intangible. Essence is considered to be everlasting by the philosophers. The theists particularly define existence in connection with God. For them, essence comes prior to existence as they believe that existence is mortal and without a significance until and unless defined with reference to the immortal.

For Whitman, as well as *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the notion of the self and the problems related to it have been a major concern. Walt Whitman's understanding of self is not that of an isolated individual seeking his right place rather it is of a self unified with the divine. His realization of the self is not that of a materialistic "I" but... [he] realized the intuitive identity of the universe and rose to the conception of an absolute Being or Substance, which is at once the support and essence of the world. *Leaves of Grass* opens with a celebration of the self in 'One-Self I Sing' (1867):

One's-Self I sing, a simple separate person,

Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.
 Of physiology from top to toe I sing,
 Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for the
 Muse; I say the Form complete is worthier far,...⁶

By calling 'One's-Self' a 'simple separate person', the poet gives credence to the individuality of the self. Through the word 'Democratic' and 'En-Masse', he suggests, right to equality and liberty to all. He sings of a complete form, a complete body and soul. The word 'complete' implies perfection, he talks of a complete form not just in terms of human beings but also that of God. It can be said that Whitman explores the idea of a parametric human form of a body that extends to the absurd formlessness as that of God. Walt Whitman's 'Form Complete' can be equated with the perfect form of the formless God as He comprehends the form as desired by His devotee. Likewise, in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* God has been called perfect as depicted through the following stanza:

ਪੂਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਆਰਾਧਿਆ ਪੂਰਾ ਜਾ ਕਾ ਨਾਉ ॥
 ਨਾਨਕ ਪੂਰਾ ਪਾਇਆ ਪੂਰੇ ਕੇ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਉ ॥ ੧ ॥⁷

...worship and adore the Perfect Lord God.

Perfect is His Name. O Nanak, I have obtained the Perfect One I sing the
 Glorious Praises of the Perfect Lord.⁸

Likewise, the entire philosophy of the scripture centers around the 'existence of our own spiritual self'⁷ Prof Sher Singh in *Philosophy of Sikhism* explains this lucidly:

The first proof for the Guru is the existence of our own spiritual self. Descartes's '*Cogito Ergo Sum*' merges into the vedantic lore of '*Ahn (Aham) Brahmn Asmi*' [I am Brahma]. But from one end to the other it is the self, which is the source of all philosophical conceptions, whether it be dualism of Descartes or the absolution of Hegel. The self (microcosm) when enlarged and magnified, freed from its limitations became God for the Guru.⁹

The definition of 'self' is incomplete if not considered with respect to the relationship that it shares with others. This relationship can be viewed as a dialectical interaction. In the course of this dialectical interaction, an individual is under pressure from family, society, institution and dogmatic religion. The self seeks to find its own validity amongst these oppressions and is in a constant pursuit to define its

identity. In the process of the search for an identity, a human being's inability to break through the circle of the inner self disrupts the interaction with others. Failure of those who remain attached to social structures, unaware of their real identity, is imminent. Therefore, in order to identify themselves, and to understand how they are different from the others, they must understand their individuality, that distinguishes them from others of their kind. Boetius defines individuality as a state of being "undivided in itself and divided from anything else".⁹ Hence, an individual is an entity, combination of several qualities centered around ontological and psychological experiences, and simultaneously distinguishable from others because of personal uniqueness, exclusiveness and related factors. The individual who is aware of personal unity is undivided and does not get seduced by materialism. Seeking the immortal that resides within the self, then becomes the sole aim of the individual.

Religious ideologies, also, explain existence and its relationship with others and with God. While dealing with God, their aim is also to focus on the outcome of the constant exploration of the universe by man. Hence, religions explain the existence of God, as well as that of man and probe the relationship between the human and the divine. The existentialists consider an individual as an isolated, solitary being responsible for his/her actions and thoughts. Throughout life man is controlled by external forces. His actions are, hence, conditioned by virtue of his/her circumstances. Therefore, the question arises: Is man really free? Individual freedom and choice are also among the main tenets of the existential thought. The urge for freedom is an endless process in which an individual, while in search for the metaphysical ends, faces innumerable threats. Consequently, s/he is constantly in a state of dread because of the fear of death or the unknown. Death, being inevitable, draws a limit to an individual's supposed powers. This dread which is considered omnipresent, typifies anguish – a term that is derived from 'angst' or dread. The word is used by the philosophers to describe the state of human mind, which is in pursuit of understanding its own condition by rejecting dead conventions of habit. Anguish, therefore, is the dread of nothingness of human existence, the meaninglessness of it.

The theists believe that it is this dread of loneliness that compels man to seek and discover the mysteries of God who alone is the eternal companion to man. The solution to all distressing enigmas of life is in the submission to the will of God. Faith in the spiritual emanates from agony, therefore, it is directly connected with anguish. An anguished individual, being vulnerable, is bound to turn to the bountiful deity for help.

Being conditioned by external forces, a human being is often entrapped in materialism, which overshadows his individuality. On the other hand, while in a quest for divinity, one's individuality is not only restored but s/he begins to justify the rights of others as well. Religion teaches humanity, which implies humility and equality. Likewise, Walt Whitman is also for democracy of the physical as well as the spiritual state. He ensures equality to all, irrespective of sex, caste or creed. In *Songs of Myself*, section 23, he places emphasis on the word 'En-Masse', a French word meaning all-together, summing up the democratic notion of togetherness. The concept of 'en-masse' has significant connotations in the modern context and the poet has a firm belief in it. As he puts it, it is such a word that never disappoints. The concept of 'word' in itself is of great importance to Whitman. In his works, the disintegration of word results in the integration of the soul:

Endless unfolding of words of ages!
 And mine a word of the modern, the word En-Masse.
 A word of faith that never balks,
 Here or henceforward it is all the same to me, I accept
 Time absolutely.
 Less the reminders of properties told my words,
 And more the reminders of life untold, and of freedom and
 extrication,¹¹

The words 'freedom and extrication' imply liberation not just of a corporeality, materiality but of intrinsicity of mind. The words have deeper, mystical connotations as they are indicative of *moksh* or *mukti*, meaning salvation.

The concept of word, i.e., *shabad* or *naam* has been of crucial importance even in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. It is considered that the *shabad* alone emancipates the soul from all bonds and releases it from

the cycle of birth and rebirth:

ਏਕੁ ਸਬਦੁ ਮੇਰੈ ਪ੍ਰਾਨਿ ਬਸਤੁ ਹੈ ਬਾਹੁੜਿ ਜਨਮਿ ਨ ਆਵਾ ॥ ੧ ॥¹²

The one word of the shabad abides within my mind;

*I shall not come to be born again.*¹³

Various religions of the world have described word as the creator of the entire universe, as in Christianity it is believed that in the beginning there was the word. Akhtarul Wasey has equated *Zikr* in Islam with *simran* in Sikhism. Hinduism, too, points out that the world was created with the sound of the word *Om*. Similarly, in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* it is believed that the universe was created with one word:

ਕੀਤਾ ਪਸਾਉ ਏਕੋ ਕਵਾਉ ॥ ਤਿਸ ਤੇ ਹੋਏ ਲਖ ਦਰੀਆਉ ॥

ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕਵਣ ਕਹਾ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥¹⁴

*You created the vast expanse of the Universe with One Word! Hundreds of thousands of rivers began to flow. How can Your Creative Potency be described?*¹⁵

Whitman, too, believed the word to be omnipotent and all pervading. He says: Here or henceforward it [the word] is all the same to me, I accept Time absolutely.

It is alone without flow, it alone rounds or completes all, that mystic baffling wonder alone completes all.¹⁶

Hence, the word becomes the hub of existence. Scriptures ascribe importance to the fact that concentrating on the word would lead to the emancipation of the soul. In *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* it is declared:

ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਅਪਰੰਪਰ ਦੇਵਾ ॥ ਅਗਮ ਅਗੋਚਰ ਅਲਖ ਅਭੇਵਾ ॥

ਦੀਨ ਦਇਆਲ ਗੋਪਾਲ ਗੋਬਿੰਦਾ ਹਰਿ ਧਿਆਵਹੁ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਗਾਤੀ ਜੀਉ ॥ ੧ ॥

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਮਧੁਸੂਦਨੁ ਨਿਸਤਾਰੇ ॥

*The Supreme Lord God is Infinite and Divine; He is Inaccessible, Incomprehensible, Invisible and Inscrutable. Merciful to the meek, Sustainer of the World, Lord of the Universe-meditating on the Lord, the Gurmukhs [The believers] find salvation. The Gurmukhs [The believers] are emancipated by the Lord.*¹⁸

Likewise, in *Passage to India*, Whitman projects a journey of the soul into the unknown realms. There is a union of the internal and the external self. The soul like a sailor, would explore such areas where other mariners dare not go. The brave soul will probe the mysteries of life, the 'seas of God' and release itself from the corporeal bonds of materialism and attain salvation. He says:

Sail forth steer for deep waters only,
 Reckless a soul, exploring, I with thee and thou with me,
 For we are bound where mariner has not dared to go,
 And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.
 O my brave soul!
 O farther farther sail!
 O daring joy, but safe! Are they not all the seas of God?
 O farther, farther, farther sail!¹⁹

It is a timeless voyage of soul after its passage through time into eternity. The repetition of words in the last lines 'O farther, farther, farther sail' signifies a completely ecstatic, but spiritual abandonment. The poem is a specimen of Whitman's optimistic outlook. Even a bitter awareness of the weaknesses and hypocrisies of human life, the poet urges the reader or the individual not to lose his vision, but to continue looking at the vastness of the sky. In the poem Whitman addresses his own soul as an entity separate from and yet identical with the individual self, complying with the aforesaid Beotius' definition of individuality. The soul has soared above the mundane and has now become the transcendental, timeless, indestructible entity of a most mystical religion. His poetry is a celebration of existence. More than that, it is a song of the soul. Whitman strikes a balance between body and soul: "I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul". Body and soul, for him, are like two entities which are unique and separate, on one hand and on the other, they are equal and integrated.

In *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, too, body and soul are considered separate. The body is demeaned because of the sins human beings tend to commit, whereas the soul is sacred and superior, which enhances the spiritual growth of man. On the contrary, body and soul also compliment each other and are equally sacrosanct and inviolable. The body is considered to be the abode of the truth or true religion of mankind called *dharmā*, which contains the divine light in it.

ਇਹੁ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਸਭੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਹੈ ਜਿਸੁ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਚੇ ਕੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਜੋਤਿ ॥
 ਗੁਰਜ ਰਤਨ ਵਿਚਿ ਲੁਕਿ ਰਹੇ ਕੋਈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਕਵੈ ਖੋਤਿ ॥
 ਸਭੁ ਆਤਮ ਰਾਮੁ ਪਛਾਣਿਆ ਤਾਂ ਇਕੁ ਰਵਿਆ ਇਕੋ ਓਤਿ ਪੋਤਿ ॥
 ਇਕੁ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਇਕੁ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਇਕੋ ਸੁਣਿਆ ਸ੍ਰਵਣ ਸਰੋਤਿ ॥

This body is the home of dharmā; the Divine light of the True Lord is within it. Hidden within it are the jewels of mystery; how rare is that

*Gurmukh, that selfless servant, who digs them out. When someone realizes that all-pervading Soul, then he sees the One and Only Lord permeating, through and through. He sees the One, he believes in the One, and with his ears he listens only to the One.*²¹

Thus, the body becomes as important as the soul. Whereas body is the home of the Divine Light, it is the soul, which is the companion of body that finally becomes the means of emancipation of the individual.

A collaboration of the physical and the metaphysical is witnessed through the discreet unification of such paradoxical elements as body and soul in Whitman's, as well as, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib's* poetry. Both established a connection but the diverse forms of being where body and soul are equated at a similar platform, ultimately coalescing. Hence, equality is the key word. The notion of equality is prevalent throughout Whitman's and *Sri Guru Granth Sahib's* poetry. Undoubtedly, Whitman's concept of equality had its origin in the Declaration of Independence of America. With Whitman, the idea extended from political to human spheres where he attempts to unite all and treat everyone with equality. To begin with he calls himself not just a poet of men but also equally of women:

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man. And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man. And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.²²

Here too, a correlation of this aspect can be directly established with *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* as, there too, woman holds a respectable status and is considered at par with man. The following *Shabad* declares that no one knows the true extent of God as the night is within day and day within night, so is a man incomplete without a woman and vice-versa:

ਦਿਨ ਮਹਿ ਰੈਣਿ ਰੈਣਿ ਮਹਿ ਦਿਨੀਅਰੁ ਉਸਨ ਸੀਤ ਬਿਧਿ ਸੋਈ ॥
ਤਾ ਕੀ ਗਤਿ ਮਿਤਿ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਜਾਣੈ ਗੁਰ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਮਝ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥ ੨ ॥
ਪੁਰਖ ਮਹਿ ਨਾਰਿ ਨਾਰਿ ਮਹਿ ਪੁਰਖਾ ਬੂਝਹੁ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ॥
ਪੁਨਿ ਮਹਿ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨ ਮਹਿ ਜਾਨਿਆ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਅਕਥ ਕਹਾਨੀ ॥

*The night is in the day, and the day is in the night. The same is true of hot and cold. No one else knows His state and extent; without the Guru, this is not understood. The female is in the male, and the male is in the female. Understand this, O God-realized being!*²⁴

Similar to Whitman's belief that "there is nothing greater than the mother of men.", Guru Granth Sahib claims respect for a woman as she is the creator of mankind:

ਭੰਡਿ ਜੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਨਿੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਮੰਗਣੁ ਵੀਆਹੁ ॥
 ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਦੋਸਤੀ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਚਲੈ ਰਾਹੁ ॥
 ਭੰਡੁ ਮੁਆ ਭੰਡੁ ਭਾਲੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਬੰਧਾਨੁ ॥
 ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ ॥
 ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੀ ਭੰਡੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਝੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥
 ਨਾਨਕ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਏਕੋ ਸਚਾ ਸੋਇ ॥

*From woman, man is born; within woman, man is conceived; to woman he is engaged and married. Woman becomes his friend; through woman, the future generations come. When his woman dies, he seeks another woman; to woman he is bound. So why call her bad? From her, kings are born. From woman, woman is born; without woman, there would be no one at all. O Nanak, only the True Lord is without a woman.*²⁶

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is also for equality of the entire universe. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev, started a movement against the prevalent inequality, religious rigidity and caste system of those times. The scripture itself includes compositions not just of the Gurus but also of *Bhagats, Sufis and Bhats*, who belonged to different religions, regions and sections of society. Therefore, *Guru Granth Sahib* is for secularism as it is not written for Sikhs alone, but has a universal appeal. In a library in Chicago, USA, all scriptures of the world are respectfully displayed. *Bhagwad Gita, The Mahabharat, The Ramayana*, etc, The Bible, Koran Sharif, and other scriptures are kept, and these are labeled as The Holy books of the Hindus, The Holy book of the Christians, The Holy book of the Muslims, respectively. On the top floor, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* has been respectfully displayed and the words outside the room read, The Holy book of the entire Universe.

Hence, the text proclaims similarity and oneness amongst all beings of the universe. The following *Shabad* clearly condemns castes. It compares God to a potter who shapes toys with the same clay:

ਜਾਤਿ ਕਾ ਗਰਬੁ ਨ ਕਰੀਅਹੁ ਕੋਈ ॥ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬਿੰਦੋ ਸੋ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਹੋਈ ॥ ੧ ॥
 ਜਾਤਿ ਕਾ ਗਰਬੁ ਨ ਕਰਿ ਮੁਰਖ ਗਵਾਰਾ ॥ ਇਸੁ ਗਰਬ ਤੇ ਚਲਹਿ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਵਿਕਾਰਾ ॥
 ਚਾਰੇ ਵਰਨ ਆਖੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਈ ॥ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬਿੰਦ ਤੇ ਸਭ ਓਪਤਿ ਹੋਈ ॥ ੨ ॥
 ਮਾਟੀ ਏਕ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਸਾਰਾ ॥ ਬਹੁ ਬਿਧਿ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਘੜੈ ਕੁਮਾਰਾ ॥ ੩ ॥
 ਪੰਚ ਤਤੁ ਮਿਲਿ ਦੇਹੀ ਕਾ ਆਕਾਰਾ ॥ ਘਟਿ ਵਧਿ ਕੇ ਕਰੈ ਬੀਚਾਰਾ ॥

No one should be proud of his social class and status. He alone is a

*Brahmin, who knows God. Do not be proud of your social class and status, you ignorant fool! So much sin and corruption comes from this pride. Everyone says that there are four castes, four social classes. They all emanate from the drop of God's Seed. The entire universe is made of the same clay. The Potter has shaped it into all sorts of vessels. The five elements join together, to make up the form of the human body. Who can say which is less, and which is more? Says Nanak, this soul is bound by its actions. Without meeting the True Guru, it is not liberated.*²⁸

In Guru Granth Sahib emphasis has been laid on the 'oneness' of all beings as well as on the oneness of God. *Guru Granth Sahib* declares that God is one, who is the sole deliverer of soul; the only one who provides consolation to beings in their sufferings:

ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥
 ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੇ ਮੰਦੇ ॥
 ਲੋਗਾ ਭਰਮਿ ਨ ਭੂਲਹੁ ਭਾਈ ॥
 ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਖਲਕ ਖਲਕ ਮਹਿ ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਸ੍ਰਬ ਠਾਂਈ ॥
 ਮਾਟੀ ਏਕ ਅਨੇਕ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਸਾਜੀ ਸਾਜਨਹਾਰੈ ॥
 ਨਾ ਕਛੁ ਪੋਚ ਮਾਟੀ ਕੇ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਨਾ ਕਛੁ ਪੋਚ ਕੁੰਭਾਰੈ ॥
 ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਸਚਾ ਏਕੋ ਸੋਈ ਤਿਸ ਕਾ ਕੀਆ ਸਭੁ ਕਛੁ ਹੋਈ ॥
 ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਨੈ ਸੁ ਏਕੋ ਜਾਨੈ ਬੰਦਾ ਕਹੀਐ ਸੋਈ ॥
 ਅਲਹੁ ਅਲਖੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ਲਖਿਆ ਗੁਰਿ ਗੁੜੁ ਦੀਨਾ ਮੀਠਾ ॥
 ਕਹਿ ਕਬੀਰ ਮੇਰੀ ਸੰਕਾ ਨਾਸੀ ਸਰਬ ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ ਡੀਠਾ ॥

*First, Allah created the Light; then, by His Creative Power, He made all mortal beings. From the One Light, the entire universe welled up. So who is good, and who is bad? O people, O Siblings of Destiny, do not wander deluded by doubt. The Creation is in the Creator, and the Creator is in the Creation, totally pervading and permeating all places. The clay is the same, but the Fashioner has fashioned it in various ways. There is nothing wrong with the pot of clay-there is nothing wrong with the Potter. The One True Lord abides in all; by His making, everything is made. Whoever realizes the Hukam of His Command knows the One Lord. He alone is said to be the Lord's slave. The Lord Allah is Unseen; He cannot be seen. The Guru has blessed me with this sweet molasses. Says Kabeer, my anxiety and fear have been taken away; I see the Immaculate Lord pervading everywhere.*³⁰

This notion of oneness is also embedded in Whitman's poetry. He believes in the fact that there is no element on earth, which does not represent divinity. Bernice Stole in this connection says that in Whitman's poetry "God is sometimes identified with the life-force,

and so symbolized by the sun as the pulse or force of creation, the power which orders the cosmos.”³¹ This is evident in the following stanza:

Why should I see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each
moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God.³²

Whenever Whitman speaks of equality, it seems that he is raising slogans. Equality for him is the first principle of life, he never believed in separation or discrimination. He says:

The race is never separated – nor man nor woman escapes; All is
inextricable – things, spirits, nature, nations, you too from presents
you come.³³

In another poem, *Great Are the Myths*, he says:

Great is liberty! Great is Equality! I am their follower, Helmsmen
of nations, choose your craft!³⁴

In the Preface to *Leaves of Grass* (1855) Whitman insists on the unity of the inner self. He says that the “perfect poet will find all beings equal in his eyes, not in society but in the inner world. In order to discover this equality, the poet must pierce through the surface to the inside.”³⁵ This realization of equality hence justifies humanity.

Towards the conclusion, I would like to quote Teilhard de Chardin, as he appropriately says that:

Mankind, the spirit of the Earth, the paradoxical conciliation of
the element with the whole and of unity with multitude – all
these are called utopian, and yet they are biologically necessary.
For them to be incarnated in the world all we may need is to
imagine our power of loving developing until it embraces the total
of man and of the earth.³⁶

The basic problem of existence and their solutions are essentially same everywhere whether addressed by scriptures or by creative writers, irrespective of the age they belong to. Drawing a parallel between Walt Whitman’s poetry and *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, a scripture of Indian origin, leads to the idea that religious and communal differences are immaterial. At the deeper spiritual level, the essence of humanity remains the same despite surface diversities.

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*Cursed be the ritual*

*That makes us forget the Loved One.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 590

ਜਲਉ ਐਸੀ ਰੀਤਿ ਜਿਤੁ ਮੈ ਪਿਆਰਾ ਵੀਸਰੈ ॥

## SIKHISM – A SECULAR AND UNIVERSAL PANTH

HARDIT SINGH\*

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### INTRODUCTION

Our universe is dynamic, in constant motion and change, bringing in new discoveries for the well being and even destruction of mankind. The human society is not what it looked like a thousand years ago. Modern technology pertaining to information has undergone tremendous change during the last fifty years. The only factor that does not change is the omnipotent, omnipresent and the omniscient God. Sikhism, like the other religions is also a product of this evolution. The distinctive characteristics of this religion are in its belief and method of worship of one formless God through the medium of *shabad*; in its conception of One humanity without consideration of caste, creed or colour; in its scripture which beside containing sayings of Gurus contains writings of other religious saints; in its institution of the Akal Takht symbolizing inseparability of temporal and spiritual affairs of life; in its beau-ideal of wishing well being of the entire mankind (*sarbat da bhala*) and, above all, in its identity of unshorn hair and turban.

### FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINE

Before embarking on his mission in about 1504 A.D., Guru Nanak made two significant statements concerning unity of God and oneness of humanity. In the first pronouncement, he uttered the *Mool Mantra* which delineates characteristics and attributes of God.

“He is the One Supreme Being. Truth is His virtue, Creative His personality and Immortal His form. He is sans fear, sans enmity, unborn and self-existent. Divine enlightener”.

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This brief description brings out that God pervades in His creation; He is unequalled and absolute in all respects. He dwells in every heart. This is a significant point as it establishes the relationship between man and the Divine. Being the Reality, His creation is also real and not an illusion. Since He is the sole creator, every one belongs to Him and there is no favourite religion or prophet. He is not alien, vengeful or angry with anyone – believers or non believers. As such, He delivers justice on the principle of 'Reap as you sow'. He is formless and not subject to birth and death. He cannot, therefore, be created, installed or established in a living or inert body.

*Shabad, gurbani* and *naam* are the Guru. "*Eka bani, ik gur, eko shabad vichar.*" It is the contemplation of these synonyms that Divine knowledge is achieved, and the gloom of darkness and egoism vanishes.

It was one of the main missions of Guru Nanak to preach the gospel of *shabad* or *naam* to wean away the people from idol or grave worship. Even during the periods of the Gurus, the stress was on contemplation of *shabad* (*Parcha shabad da*).

The second pronouncement was "*Na koi Hindu, na Mussalman*" – "No one is Hindu, nor Muslim." Hinduism and Islam were the two principle religions of India at that time. What Guru Nanak had meant to stress was that God does not recognize religious distinctions, as the whole humanity belongs to Him. Guru Gobind Singh said, "Recognize all mankind as one made of the same five elements (Earth, water, air, fire and ether) ; their features, eyes, nose etc are the same; their Lord is the Creator and Nourisher of all; The temple and mosque are the same and so are the Hindu worship and Muslim prayers; men are all one, recognize no distinctions among them."

Guru Nanak, after his long and wide travels, settled down at Kartarpur (now in Pakistan) to give practical shape to his teachings of Oneness of God and humanity and truthful living. He established an institution of Dharamsal (now known as gurdwara). The gurdwara consists of two wings. One is prayer hall where the congregation of devotees sit together without any distinction of caste, colour, creed or gender for prayers. This corporate body of devotees is known as *sangat*. The other wing is the community kitchen (*Guru ka Langar*), where every one partakes of free food sitting in rows without any discrimination (*Pangat*). Even the Moghul emperor, Akbar, had to sit

with common people to take his meal before he could meet the Guru. In both the wings, devotees are expected to do service (*sewa*) and voluntarily contribute their tithe (*daswand*) towards running of the gurdwara and the kitchen. The institution of *Sangat* and *Pangat* was introduced to inculcate the message of oneness of humanity, to eradicate the distinction between the poor and rich, high and low, and religious prejudices.

### **GURU GRANTH SAHIB**

Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture, is unique in many respects. It was authored and compiled by the Gurus themselves in their life time. Besides the compositions of six Gurus, it includes the sayings of 30 other seers, both Hindu and Muslim of medieval India. Guru Granth Sahib is written in Sant/ Brij Bhasha which is commonly understood in most of India. Various languages such as Sanskrit, Persian, Bengali, Marathi, *et al*, metaphors from various folklores and idioms have been used in its compilation, but the message of oneness remains the same. It enjoys the status of eternal Guru and Juristic Person. Seven of the seers are Muslims but their hymns together with the others enjoy the same respect as that of the Gurus. Music forms the basis of the classification of the hymns. Professor Puran Singh, the famous poet and mystic, has said that GGS “is the scripture of all nations for it is a lyric of divine love, and all the people of the earth subsist on such glowing lyrical power. Guru Granth is but one song, one idea and one life.” GGS is pure divine wisdom which does not even mention names of the Sikh Gurus nor narrates any stories or lays down rituals and dogmas.

At the end of the GGS text, its compiler the 5<sup>th</sup> Nanak has concluded: “It stresses three fundamental aspects : Truth, Contentment and *Amrit Naam*. The *Amrit Naam* is the basic love energy which sustains every thing else. Whoever contemplates this *Amrit Naam* and imbibes the virtues of Truth and Contentment shall be emancipated.”

### **HARMANDIR SAHIB, AMRITSAR**

The Harmandir Sahib, the Temple of God, commonly known as the Golden Temple, was built amidst a lake by the 5<sup>th</sup> Nanak in the year 1589. The lake encircling the Temple is called Amritsar – ‘Ocean

of nectar'. It remains practically open for 24 hours for prayers without any entry restrictions. The 5<sup>th</sup> Nanak installed the scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, as the Presiding Deity.

### SECULARISM AND TOLERANCE

Guru Nanak's constant companion was a Muslim bard, Bhai Mardana. In fact most of the divine singers, particularly the ones in the Harmandir Sahib, were Muslims. The 6<sup>th</sup> Nanak raised a mosque for Muslim prayers in a newly built town and this is still called "*Guru ki Masjid*". He also built a tank in Amritsar to commemorate the memory of a divine Muslim lady known as Mai Kaulan. Many Muslims who were convinced of Guru's fight against oppression sided with the Guru. Said Khan, a senior Moghul General, went over to the Guru's side during a crucial battle. Pir Budhu Shah of Sadhaura fought a battle along with his five sons and 700 followers for Guru Gobind Singh against the hill rajas. The martyrdom of the 9<sup>th</sup> Nanak in 1675 is an example of paramount sacrifice for preservation of human justice and religious freedom. The Guru gave his life to save the caste mark and sacred thread of the Hindus.

Sikhism rejects the ideology of *avtarvad*, monoasticism, celibacy and the theory of resurrection or doomsday. For instance, Baba Farid in one of his '*Shaloks*' asks the faithful to visit mosques five times a day and in another one he visualizes grave yard calling upon the faithful to return to it, i.e., their ultimate resting place without fear till the doomsday.

"The world is going up in flame, O God, shower it with your mercy and save it, deliver it, by what ever means." In another hymn Guru Nanak prays for the well being of all creatures- "By Thy grace O Lord, all the creatures may be looked after." Guru Nanak's message of oneness of God and humanity was so potent that both the Hindus and Muslims claimed him to be their spiritual head - "*Baba Nanak Shah Fakir, Hindu ka Guru Musalmanan ka Pir.*"

## PUNJAB ALONE NO LONGER THE HOMELAND OF SIKHS

RAGHBIR SINGH\*

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When the Sikh faith as propounded by Guru Nanak Dev and preached thereafter for over 200 years by his successor nine Gurus started showing its awakening effect on the poor neglected, frightened and terrorized masses who had suffered long the rulers and the priests, classes became wary of this faith. They felt it a direct and open challenge to their autocratic methods used to keep the poor under their thumb. They unleashed a reign of terror not only against the Gurus but also those, who, under their influence, had gathered enough moral courage to stand up for their rights. They adopted all means to suppress the movement, but since it was based on Truth, it continued to gather strength. A time came when it became a potential challenge to the administration, and no tyrannical methods used by them could subdue the movement. As the movement refused to die even after the Guru period, these powers identified Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar as the source of inspiration for their crusade. The inimical forces demolished Darbar Sahib and filled up its *sarover*. But the Sikhs recouped it soon and pursued their goal with renewed vigour. Thereafter, the opponent forces took steps to dilute the influence of Gurbani and with that end in view they handed over the management of Gurdwaras to such people, who, by their actions and interpretation of Gurbani, adversely affected the faith of the followers in Gurdwaras and Gurbani. When the Sikhs found the Gurdwaras being misused by *Mahants*, etc., they, after many sacrifices got control of Gurdwaras and set up SGPC to supervise them. This body went on well with its duties till Partition, that dealt a heavy blow to the Sikhs and their

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property. They got dispersed in India. With the passage of time, enterprising Sikhs went to other parts of the globe where they are trying to maintain their culture amidst difficult circumstances. They have established Gurdwaras where all sorts of full-fledged Sikh activities are going on. Chairs on Sikh philosophy and other concerning matters have been established in foreign universities where various types of research papers about Sikhism are being published and debated all over the world. Sikhs have entered parliaments and other wings of the administration of those lands and their contribution is significant. All these activities have naturally led to many issues that need to be settled by the Guru Panth with the active help of SGPC and Sri Akal Takht in the light of Gurbani and the approved Sikh Rehat Maryada.

Recently, I went to New Zealand where there is sizeable population of Sikhs. I visited a number of Gurdwaras where religious sessions are held every day regularly. On Sundays and important days like Gurmurb and Diwali, etc., religious personalities from outside New Zealand come to acquaint the Sikhs with their history. They explain Gurbani and its importance in day-to-day life. *Langars* are arranged at noon on Sundays. They are much better arranged than here. In one Gurdwara in Auckland I found that the *sangat* including children was 90% baptized while in another in Hamilton that sprawled over a huge campus with playgrounds, its President, from near Nawan Shehar, although clean-shaven was wearing turban. His family had been there for about 100 years. His family has flourishing dairy farms. During discussion he showed lot of interest in knowing more about Sikh *itihās*. He even became subscriber of *Abstract of Sikh Studies* and promised to enroll more subscribers. It was a beautiful scene to see students of various classes with turbans of different colours playing games like hockey, football and volleyball. When I visited another Gurdwara in Auckland a member of its managing committee was frank enough to tell me that they have no faith in the Sikh political leaders of Punjab. He showed lot of distrust in them. But I was disappointed when he told me that they did not believe in the Rehat Maryada also in the form it is practiced in Punjab and that they have their own Maryada. Although I was carrying for distribution a few copies of the Sikh Rehat Maryada publication by the SGPC, I thought it prudent not to discuss this issue any more with him. While I was preparing to

leave that Gurdwara, a person with trimmed beard took me to the office of the management where 7-8 turbaned people with both trimmed and uncut beards were sitting. One of them introduced himself as President, New Zealand Central Indian Association. He was the owner of a big well-managed tourist hotel. Another was a big property dealer. They very intelligently discussed various issues concerning Sikhs till four in the afternoon and exhibited lot of interest in Sikh affairs, but felt cut off from their culture in the absence of any proper guidance and good Sikh literature reaching them. Conditions in UK, Canada and USA are better and different because Sikhs have long association with those countries.

Events like Operation Blue Star, Punjab situation from the year 1978 onward resulted in exodus of large number of Sikh youths seeking political asylum in foreign lands. They have established a number of Gurdwaras in different cities. Gurdwara disputes, Sri Akal Takht Hukamnama about *langar*, ban on turban and *kirpan* and hate campaign against mistaken identity of Sikhs after 9/11 attack on WTC led the serious and saner elements of the Sikh community to feel the necessity of evolving a system by which such problems could be properly discussed and considered in the light of the situation prevailing in the countries of their origin within of course the parameters of Sikh *sidhant*. Sikhs born abroad and foreign-converts have language problem in reading the Gurbani from Guru Granth Sahib which needs to be so translated in the language understood by them so that the message remains intact and can be conveyed to the non-Sikh foreigners for their benefit.

The Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh took up cudgels for this colossal task and it is heartening to note that after discussing the issue with learned people of various Sikh organizations, both here and abroad, for long they have come out with a draft constitution of an apex body to be known as the International Sikh Confederation. Its objectives are detailed in the proposed constitution some of which are as below: -

1. To share the ideology of the Guru Granth Sahib with all humanity for evolving a harmonious social order of the basic Sikh tenet – *Sarbat da Bhala*;
2. To advance the cause of Sikh community in national and



international forums;

3. To articulate and express the views on behalf of the Sikh community in the above forums and thus to represent the Panth in all domestic and international spheres;
4. To help resolve and work towards settlement of all philosophical and other issues affecting the Panth as a whole;
5. To deal with problems of existing or potential schisms in the Panth;

Last April, on the invitation of Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Ludhiana, IOSS discussed this proposed set-up with fairly large representative Sikh intelligentsia of Ludhiana. Thereafter, such meetings have been held at Amritsar and Patiala also where enthusiasm for such a forum was quite visible. They welcomed the proposal thoroughly and gave very useful suggestions for the purpose. Press media like *Daily Ajit*, *Punjabi Tribune* and *Hindustan Times* and local TV channels covered these meetings in detail. The idea seems to have caught the attention of fairly large Sikh population abroad as well. It is heartening to note that the IOSS now plans to hold a conclave on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2005 to discuss this issue further and obtain final approval of the Sikh *sangat*. It shall be a remarkable service to the Panth to have such an international organization for which the IOSS and its office bearers deserve kudos. This confederation will go a long way to bring cohesion in the relationship between the Sikhs in foreign lands and their basic institutions like Sri AkaI Takht and SGPC.

□

*God alone is the Sustainer of all.*

*None else has sustenance in his hands.*

— Guru Granth Sahib, p 144

ਨ ਰਿਜਕੁ ਦਸਤ ਆ ਕਸੇ ॥ ਹਮਾ ਰਾ ਏਕੁ ਆਸ ਵਸੇ ॥

## BHAI BHAGWAN SINGH GYANEE

S P SINGH\*

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He was a fiery orator, a revolutionary poet and president of the Gadar party from 1914 to 1920. He was also founder of the “Humanology Society” and “The American Institute of Culture” (1930) with affiliated “Self Culture Associations.” He was a philosopher, educationist, creative thinker and author of several books including, *The Art of Living, Science of Perpetual Youth, The Ideal of Friendship, Humanology Notes, Paths to Perfection, Why Men Fail, Gyana Yoga, Concentration, Mysteries and Functions of the Subconscious Mind, Love Marriage and Divorce, The Greatest Enemy of Man, Creative Wisdom, Principles and the Law, Karma and Dharma*, as well as many others.

Bhai Bhagwan Singh was born in the small village of Varing, near Sarhali, Dist. Amritsar, Punjab, on July 27, 1884. His father was Sri Sarmukh Singh and mother Srimati Har Kaur. He was the only surviving adult out of nine children. He learned Urdu in a village primary school but due to harsh treatment from his teacher for being late one day, even when he was speaking the truth, he left school. His main or formal education was under the guidance of his paternal grandfather, Baba Rattan Singh, who taught him Sikh history, Punjabi literature, *Adi Granth* and *Dasam Granth* and also familiarized him with Sikh Religio-Political traditions. Baba Ji was a Hakim, had served in the Khalsa Army and had fought against the British during the Anglo-Sikh wars. Bhai Bhagwan Singh also stayed involved in wrestling and athletics and was a physically strong person.

At the age of twenty, Bhai Bhagwan Singh was admitted to the Updeshak College at Gujranwala, where he completed Budhivan,

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Vidvan and Giani, all in eleven months. He was appointed as a teacher in the same college. In the following year, 1907, he was appointed lecturer in Sikhism, in which capacity he travelled extensively covering Northern India from Delhi to Peshawar. It was during this time that he became a Nationalist. He delivered anti-government speeches during the Agrarian unrest of 1907-1908. He met many leaders and gave many lectures alongside Sadar Ajit Singh, uncle of Shaheed Bhagat Singh. In the middle of 1908, after the suppression of the uprising in Punjab, the revolutionary movement went underground. Bhai Bhagwan Singh became a teacher in Daska, Distt Sialkot, during which time he met Saint Har Bilas, under whom he studied the Six Systems of Hindu Philosophy, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagvad Gita*, *Vedanta* and Nyaya-Systems of Logic, etc.

During this time, Bhai Bhagwan Singh also remained politically active and it became necessary for him to leave India in August of 1909. From Calcutta, under an assumed name, he travelled covering Burma, Siam, Malay Straits, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, and Singapore, everywhere preaching nationalism, mostly to Army soldiers. While in Ipoh, he was ordered to leave by a *Subedar* from his own village. He gave revolutionary speeches while he was a *Granthi* at Penang Gurdwara.

Bhai Bhagwan Singh next reached Hong Kong in March 1910. His intention was to proceed to U.S.A., but after listening to his lectures, the central Sikh temple committee made an offer and he accepted the position of the *Granthi*. Here he had a fierce clash with Police Jamadar Lal Singh who also happened to be the president of the Gurdwara. Lal Singh was a very powerful police figure whom many people feared. By this time Bhai Bhagwan Singh had gained much popularity and support. He was able to gather 500 signatures which he submitted to the Governor of Hong Kong regarding Lal Singh's unnecessary interference in the Gurdwara's affairs. As a result, Lal Singh was ordered to either apologize or be prohibited from entering the Gurdwara. The position as a *Granthi* gave him easy access to all strata of society, including the army, where he could come and go at will. He secretly preached revolution. The Sunday meetings at the Gurdwara were being attended not only by Sikhs but by Muslims and Hindus as well. Except for a few Subedars, the entire army and officers

were ready to take up the cause of India's independence. Bhagwan Singh relayed this information to Dr. Sun Yat Sen, the famous Chinese revolutionary, who did not think China was strong enough then to incur the hostility of the British. While in Hong Kong, he was twice arrested, once in 1911 and again in 1912, both times for preaching sedition. Dr. Kirpal Singh, in an article published in *The Sikh Review*, wrote "This trumpet call to duty was responded to by the Sikhs living all over the world. Bhai Bhagwan Singh, the priest of Sikh temple in Hong Kong, took up that cause of his country's freedom. Poet as he was, he recited poems in Punjabi, breathing revolution, enjoining upon the audience to struggle hard against tyranny and oppression. The revolutionary priest greatly inspired Baba Gurdit Singh of Kamagata Maru... The British government in Hong Kong was so upset by the outpourings of Bhai Bhagwan Singh that the Sikh military men living there were prohibited to attend the Gurdwara."

In May 1913, Bhai Bhagwan Singh, after making arrangements for his wife and three children to return to India, arrived in British Columbia, Canada. There he openly clashed with an English man by the name of Hopkinson who had been sent by the British Government of India in order to keep the community of four thousand Indians living in Canada disunited. Bhagwan Singh reorganized the United India League and Guru Nanak Mining Company which had almost ceased to function. He also unified not only the Sikhs among themselves, but the Indian community as a whole. Two months after his arrival, he was arrested but released on two thousand dollars bail. A special order was secured from the Governor General of Canada for his deportation. Thus five months after his arrival in Canada, he was dragged out in the middle of the night, on November 18, 1913, from the home of Babu Harnam Singh Sahri (later martyred) and deported, even though two writs of habeas corpus had been issued. He was man-handled, physically injured, and literally thrown on the "Empress of Japan", destination India.

The following is extracted from "Gadar Movement" by Harish Puri. "The arrival of Gyanee Bhagwan Singh in Vancouver in the early months of 1913 gave a real spurt to a revolutionary political movement in Canada. Bhagwan Singh had been a Sikh priest in the Gurdwaras at Perak in the Federated Malay States and at Hong Kong,

and was orator of great merit. He was the first man to deliver vigorous revolutionary diatribes against the British rule... The special tribunal in Lahore conspiracy judgement rightly observed – Vancouver became the first centre of seditious propaganda among Indians until it was eclipsed by that of California with the launching of Gadar movement.” Also (taken from “War Against King Emperor”, page xiv); “The prosecution has not considered it necessary to place before us much evidence in regard to Vancouver, but we know from confession of Nand Singh (p. 407) that one Bhagwan Singh, a noted seditionist, arrived there at the end of 1912 or beginning of 1913, and commenced a series of lectures against the British government in India, He also started lecturing in the Vancouver Hall, remaining there for three months, filling, as Nand Singh says, his audience with revolutionary ideas. Bhagwan Singh was eventually deported, but not before the seeds of mischief had been sown among the Indians at Vancouver.”

In spite of his injuries, Bhagwan Singh managed to escape his guard once in Japan. He knew that continuing the journey to India would have been fatal. In Japan he stayed with Maulvi Barak Tullah, who was a professor of languages at the Imperial University at Tokyo. Here they met with Dr Sun Yat Sen as well as Prince Toyama, the head of the very powerful Dragon Society of Japan. The need to secure arms and ammunition caused Bhagwan Singh to leave Japan in March 1914 for Germany on a Japanese Ship, but he was discovered by the British at Shanghai. Upon reaching Hong Kong, a warrant was issued for his arrest and the ship was searched. However, through the assistance of the captain, he disguised himself as a Japanese, escaped again to Japan and rejoined professor Barkatullah. While the Komagatu Maru was docked in Yokohama, Bhagwan Singh and Barak Tullah gave two lectures to the passengers and informed them of the conditions prevailing in Canada which was the destination of the ship.

On May 23, 1914, Bhagwan Singh, along with Barak Tullah, landed in San Francisco. They immediately went to the Gadar Ashram, 430 Hill Street. Shortly after their arrival, Bhagwan Singh was elected president, Professor Barkatullah Vice President, and Pandit Ram Chandra given the responsibility of “ Hindustan Gadar.”, the weekly official publication. Moreover, the three of them were appointed Commissioners. A few months later the first World War was declared.

In their Commission meeting held in August 1914, it was decided to declare open warfare against British rule in India and proclaim India a Free and Sovereign Republic. Gyanee ji wrote *Ailan-e-Jung*. (The Declaration of War). As a result of this meeting, Barak Tullah was sent to Persia, Afghanistan, Turkey, etc and Bhagwan Singh was assigned to cover Japan, North and South China, Korea, Manchuria, and the Phillippines. In Japan, Bhagwan Singh and Rash Behari Bose met in a very dramatic way. As a result Bhagwan Singh authorized and sent Rash Behari Bose to Germany on a secret mission. It was in Nanking, on a Chinese ship, Bhagwan Singh wrote a booklet entitled *Jung or Azadi* ( War or Freedom), which embodied the aims discussed at the August meeting in San Francisco. With the help of Germans, two hundred thousand copies were distributed among Indians all over Malaya, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and the Phillippines. These were also sent to the thirty-five thousand Indian war prisoners held in Germany, most of whom were Sikhs. Bhagwan Singh was arrested in the Phillippines. Warrants were also issued in China for the arrest of Bhagwan Singh, Rash Behari Bose and Gopal Singh. In Manila Bhai Bhagwan Singh had a secret meeting with Hafiz Abdullah who was later martyred.

In June of 1916 while still in China, Bhagwan Singh made secret arrangements to return to San Francisco hidden in a cargo ship loaded with cowhides. As he did so without passport or ticket, to avoid legal problems, he was forced to escape to Panama. Here too he was ordered to leave. He bought a ticket and while on his way to Galveston, Texas, aboard a U.S. fruit ship, he was removed in Havana, held for three days by immigration and sent back to Panama. Finally, Bhagwan Singh on the advice and help of General George Goethal, the builder and governor of the Panama Canal, he reentered the United States, legally, landing in New York on October 11, 1916, only to face arrest a few months later in the famous San Francisco Hindu conspiracy case. As his bail had been set at twenty-five thousand dollars, the highest amount among the so-called conspirators, he remained in custody for six months during the trial period. On judgement day, Bhagwan Singh was given the maximum sentence of two years, minus six months already spent in county jail. He served the prison time at

McNeill Island Federal Penitentiary. Besides doing hard labour, Bhagwan Singh availed the opportunity to read many English books on various subjects. Just before he was to be released, he was again arrested for deportation but was released on ten thousand dollars bail. He fought his own case and finally in 1920, the deportation proceedings were dropped.

In 1948, at the request of his countrymen, Bhagwan Singh returned to the Pacific coast, holding meetings and editing and publishing a monthly periodical *Nav-Yug* for eighteen months. As soon as India was free, he applied for his passport to return home which he did not receive for two years. It was during this time his wife, Harbans Kaur, died without ever seeing her husband again. At long last, upon the invitation of Partap Singh Kairon, Chief Minister of Punjab (under pressure from family and friends), Bhagwan Singh returned to India.

“After nearly fifty years in exile in foreign lands, I’m home. I left incognito-under an assumed name to work for freedom, I returned a free man on an Indian ship under its own flag,” said Gyaneer ji. His first act on landing at Bombay harbour was to bend on his knees and say “Bande-Matram” and then he laid flat on his belly to kiss the motherland which was “Free at last.” This was a scene to watch.

*Kuli Kuli Pukarda Jag Saanun*

We are called coolies in countries abroad

*Saada Jhulda Kitey Nishan Kiyon Nahin*

We do not have a flag of our own

*Kikoon Bachangey Sada Ghulam Rahkey*

Will we always live the life of slaves?

*Saanun Rajniti Wala Giyan Kiyon Nahin*

Why do we not know the science of politics?

*Dhayi Totru Kha Gaye Khet Sada*

A handful of people have taken control of our land

*Hindustan da Koi Kisan Kiyon Nahin*

Why is there not a caretaker of Hindustan?

(A few lines from one of Bhai Bhagwan Singh’s very popular revolutionary poems.)

## REVOLUTIONARY HERO – UDHAM SINGH

SUBA SINGH\*

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The great martyr, sworn enemy of British Imperialism, Sher Singh alias Ude Singh, alias Ram Mohammad Singh Azad, alias Frank Brazil, alias Udhham Singh, alias Mohammad Singh Azad, alias M S Azad, Bawa Sahib, was born on 26<sup>th</sup> December, 1899 at Sunam (Patiala). Udhham Singh set an example of sacrifice for the country, which finds few parallels in the history of Indian people. He came of poor parents and became an orphan at the age of eight. His father Tehal Singh died in 1907.

Along with his elder brother Sadhu Singh, he was admitted to the Central Khalsa Yatim Khana (Orphanage), Amritsar where he took education upto matric. In addition to his school study, he got training in the arts of carpentry mechanic, painting and music, and was well versed in Sikh history. He looked smart and active, and had a muscular body. Even as a child he exhibited the capacity for brave and adventurous deeds. At the age of six, he made a wolf run away, wielding an axe only, and thus saved his goats.

His one great mission was the protection of ‘national pride’, for which he was always prepared to make the highest sacrifice for its restoration. Without dignity and self-respect, freedom loses all meaning. In this respect, his words used in the London court are significant :

“My youth is made up of the soil, food and air of my country... To use the word ‘mercy’ with my name would be to hit at our self-respect, national pride and our national tradition of self-sacrifice... I so madly crave for the fulfilment of my mission that I would feel so free and contented by putting the execution noose around my neck.”

He had immense love and compassion for the Indian people, and

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\* Principal, Gurmat College, Patiala



his heart went out for the victims of the cruelties perpetrated by the British rulers. Sir Michael O'Dwyer who was the Governor General of Punjab, used the strictest oppressive measures to suppress the masses. The Rowlatt Act was passed in 1919. It was a dangerous act for the Indians. Under this act anyone in any situation could be arrested without assigning any reason. The arrested people depended solely on mercy of the white administration for their release. On April 9, 1919 the DC of Amritsar arrested Dr Saif-din-Kichloo, Dr Satya Pal and Pt Kotu Mal. On the Baisakhi day, the 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1919 about twenty thousand people belonging to different religions and communities had gathered in Jallianwala Bagh to register a peaceful protest against the arrest of their leaders under the Rowlatt Act.

Brig General Dyre came to the scene with a platoon of armed soldiers and surveyed the crowd from a platform. It was all peaceful and there was no provocation whatsoever. But still without giving a warning he shouted 'fire, fire'.

For full ten minutes the torrential rain of bullets fell upon the terrified crowd scrambling present on the terrific haste to escape.

Udham Singh who was on scene as a social worker (serving water to the needy persons), was an eye witness to the whole incident. As the Marshal law had been imposed, Sir Sunder Singh Majithia arranged passes for the *yatimkhana* children for cremation or burial of the dead and also for the treatment of the injured. The big piles of dead bodies created deep impression on the sensitive mind of Udham Singh. There and then, he took a vow to avenge the massacre ordered by Sir Michael O'Dwyer for he held him primarily responsible for the whole episode.

After the massacre, he left the orphanage and visited many places in India, but always nursing the feeling of revenge in his heart. He began to educate his countrymen against the injustice and brutalities of the British empire. He began to call himself Ram Mohammad Singh Azad. He adopted this name to represent the unity of all the communities of India. He zealously followed Guru Gobind Singh's precepts '*Manas ki jat sabhe ekke pahchanbo*' (the whole mankind is to be identified as one).

A case was registered against him in the city Kotwali vide FIR No. 227, dated 30-08-1927. He was arrested for illegal possession of four revolvers, given four years rigorous imprisonment and was kept

in Central Jail Multan. On his release from jail on 23-1-1931, he looked for an opportunity to go to Europe for the fulfilment of his mission. In 1933, he got his passport in his assumed name and reached Europe. It was after a long wait that an opportunity came his way. Sardar Udham Singh ceased to see his friends in the beginning of 1940. He did not want the police to harass anyone for his deeds. It was the fateful day on 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1940, when he invited his friends to a traditional Punjabi meal, and distributed 'Ladoos', which are regarded an augury of success for a proposed venture. He announced among his friends, "The next day London would witness a marvel. The British Empire will be shaken to its foundation." He told them that 21 years had passed, but the aggression of murderers of Jallianwala Bagh had not vanished from his soul and that the time had come when he would succeed in his cherished mission.

In the India Office, London, he had seen a poster advertising a joint meeting of the East India Association and the Royal Central Asian Society to be held at Caxton Hall. On 13<sup>th</sup> March, 1940, O'Dwyer was to address the meeting. He spoke against the Indian people in a very abusive language. Udham Singh had already managed to enter the hall. Bearing this insult and indignation was impossible for him. This lion of Punjab got up, took out his revolver and fired two shots at O'Dwyer. The tyrant was made to sleep for ever. He also injured Lord Zetland, Sir Louis Dane & Lord Lamington. Very soon the Caxton Hall police surrounded the place. Udham Singh did not make any attempt to escape. Rather he handed himself to the police. His mission had been fulfilled.

In a statement in the court of trial, he said "I have seen the Indian people dying because of the atrocities of the British rulers. I have avenged the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. This was my duty... I have fulfilled my promise. There is no sense in dying of old age. I like to die young." In the court he further added, "I don't mind the sentence ten, twenty or fifty years or to be hanged. I have done my duty." During the police interrogation he said, "Michael O'Dwyer was the chief culprit. He wanted to crush the spirit of my people, so I have crushed him. For full 21 years I have been trying to wreak vengeance. I am happy that I have done the job. I am not scared of death. I am dying for my country. What greater honour could be bestowed on me than

death for the sake of my motherland?”

He was awarded death sentence by the court. In the court he very enthusiastically shouted slogans like “*Inqlab Zindabad, Inqlab Zindabad, Inqlab Zindabad*”, “Down with British Imperialism.” After that he very smilingly accepted the punishment and kissed the gallows on 31st July, 1940 in London. The news of the murder of Michael O’Dwyer spread throughout the world like wild fire. Udham Singh wanted that everyone in the whole world should see the end of chief culprit of Jallianwala Bagh, Michael O’Dwyer by a Punjabi revolutionary. This news broadcasted from BBC London, created a shudder in the retired and working British bureaucrats. After seven years of his martyrdom, India got freedom from the yoke of British Government.

The shooting and murder of O’Dwyer was welcomed by the general people in India and particularly in Punjab. This heroic action was highlighted by the radio, press and newspapers all over the world. Insult to the nation had been avenged.

His great sacrifice will remain a source of inspiration for the coming generations for all times to come, and will keep the torch of freedom burning in the hearts of the freedom lovers.

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*By lodging the fear of God in mind  
All other fears (of the world as also of the yama)  
Are banished from it.  
So, what fear is left to frighten us any more ?  
– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 151*

ਡਰਿ ਘਰੁ ਘਰਿ ਡਰੁ ਡਰਿ ਜਾਇ ॥  
ਮੈ ਡਰੁ ਕੇਹਾ ਜਿਤੁ ਡਰਿ ਡਰੁ ਪਾਇ ॥

## THE ORIGIN, CONTENT, AUTHENTICITY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RATTAN SINGH BHANGOO'S GUR PANTH PARKASH (1841)

KULWANT SINGH\*

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### ORIGIN

Rattan Singh Bhangoo's *magnum opus*, *Gur Panth Parkash* is one of the three oldest historical chronicles of the origin and evolution of the Sikh Panth, the other two being Bhai Kesar Singh Chibber's *Bansawali Nama Dasam Patshahian ka* (1826) and the *Janamsakhis*. Bhangoo's *Gur Panth Parkash* came to be written under special circumstances with the British capture of Delhi from the Marhattas and their collusion with the predominantly Sikh-dominated state rulers of major principalities east of Sutlej to checkmate the advance of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Khalsa forces. Exactly when the British captured Delhi, the Khalsa forces under the command of S Baghel Singh attacked Delhi, which unnerved the British. It was this sudden emergence of the Khalsa on the newly occupied throne of Delhi by the British, that they decided to know the real history of the Sikh Panth and their evolution in order to draw proper lessons and prepare a suitable strategy to deal with the powerful Sikh Sovereign Maharaja Ranjit Singh. For this purpose, they first consulted the last Moghul emperor of India who gave them a very distorted and biased version of the Sikhs and their military exploits. General Sir David Ochterlony, who was the political resident of the British at Delhi, being a keen scholar of history, wanted an objective and unbiased account of the

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Now working as a Research Scholar with the IOSS on English Translation of the great Punjabi epic *Gur Panth Parkash* by Rattan Singh Bhangoo

Sikh Panth's origin and evolution. For this purpose, he asked his agent Captain Murray at Ludhiana to get the true history of the Sikhs recorded with the aim of checking the veracity of Moghul emperor's version of the Sikh history in order to send this historical document for its preservation in the British Museum in London. Captain Murray summoned the services of one Muslim scribe Bootey Shah Maulvi to dictate him the history of the Sikhs. This Muslim scribe, being as much prejudiced as the Moghul emperor against the Sikhs, also recorded an extremely distorted and biased version of the Sikhs and their evolution. It is at this juncture, as if by coincidence, that Captain Murray also came into contact with Rattan Singh Bhangoo, a resident of village Bhari near Samrala, in his court at Ludhiana. During the course of their random meetings, Captain Murray shared his mission of getting the history of the Sikhs recorded and revealed that he had already got one version recorded by Bootey Shah Maulvi of Ludhiana. Captain Murray also entreated Rattan Singh Bhangoo to acquaint him with the Sikh history, since the latter came from a Sikh background. He also sought the latter's opinion on Bootey Shah's version. Acceding to Captain Murray's request, Rattan Singh Bhangoo went through Bootey Shah's version and found it not only inadequate, but extremely biased and completely bereft of truth and objectivity. Being a direct descendant of the great Sikh martyrs and having a comprehensive knowledge of the origin, evolution and true history of the Sikhs acquired through the then prevalent oral narration of events from generation to generation, he felt an urgent need to set the record straight and relate the true, unbiased and objective history of the origin and evolution of the Sikh Panth from its beginning upto his time. He told Captain Murray candidly about the inadequacies and glaring distortions in Bootey Shah's version because of his in-built racial hostility and religious bias against the Sikhs. He also offered to narrate an objective and true account of the origin and evolution of the Sikh Panth to Captain Murray. The latter accepted this offer and entrusted him to record the history of the Sikh Panth. Thus, the composition of the *Gur Panth Parkash* in the form of recorded statements started in 1808 and was completed in 1841. Later on the author collected these statements into a single volume and its final version came out in 1898 at Amritsar.

The composition of the *Gur Panth Parkash* served a manifold

purpose. In the opinion of Giani Lal Singh, it aimed not only at presenting a befitting rebuttal to the highly distorted versions of the bigoted Muslim emperor and Bootey Shah Maulvi because of their age-long hatred and enmity with the Sikh, but also to serve as a bulwark against any possible similar attempts by the casteist Hindus and highly suspicious Britishers in future. It also aimed at presenting a convincing account of the origin, evolution and sovereign power of the Sikhs for the coming generations, especially when his British patrons had wanted to preserve the Sikh history in their National Museum in London. It was with this five-fold objective that he undertook the most arduous task of recording the entire Sikh history from its origin upto the middle of nineteenth century. Thus, this work successfully refutes this version of the Muslims that Sikhs were an insignificant rowdy section of the Indian populace without having any distinct national identity, a divinely-ordained scripture and a religious order like the Hindus and the Muslims, and any sovereign status of their own. It records that the Sikh Panth has all the qualifications of a legitimate nation and an organized religion with its own divinely-ordained scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, as the word of God revealed through the Sikh Gurus, its distinct dress code and symbols, its church, together with their martial history of combating the tyranny and oppression of the highly bigoted and autocratic Moghul rulers and other Muslim Afghan invaders from the North West.

### **CONTENT**

This 18<sup>th</sup> century epic, written in vernacular Punjabi verse, mostly in the form of couplets, quartets and octaves spread over 170 chapters, encapsulates the glorious history of the Sikh Panth from its origin with the revelation of God's word to the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev, and other nine Sikh Gurus as Guru Nanak's spiritual inheritors; the supreme sacrifice of ninth Sikh Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, for the defence of the helpless Hindus, the creation of the Khalsa on the Vaisakhi day of 1699 at Anandpur Sahib through initiation by the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, and the further evolution of the Sikh Panth. What makes this epic distinct from other epics is its detailed description of the events of the bloodiest period of one hundred years from 1675 (the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur) to 1775, in short, virtually the whole of 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Sikh Panth

passed through the most trying times and fought some of the bloodiest battles and guerilla warfare after their almost total decimation, and emerging mysteriously once again out of their ashes and setting up a sovereign Sikh state with its own Army, Currency and Civil Administration over a vast territory in the North of India. Some of the other memorable sagas of the Sikh valour and sacrifice which find their mention in this epic are battles of Anandpur Sahib, Chamkaur Sahib, Muktsar, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur's invasion of Sirhind, his reclamation of Punjab, and later on his own execution, the two worst Ghallugharas (Genocides) and the supreme sacrifices of great Sikh martyrs, namely, Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Taru Singh, Sukha Singh, Mehtab Singh, and several others. It presents a glorious saga of terrible confrontations of the Sikhs with the tyrannical and autocratic Muslim rulers of Delhi, Sirhind, Lahore, Jalandhar, Kasur, Multan and foreign Afghan invaders like Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali, and final emergence of the Khalsa as sovereign nation and state after a century of sacrifices. This is, perhaps, the first authentic record of the history of the Sikh Panth. Its detailed and rich content cataloging the major landmark events in the Sikh history in a near chronological order makes it one of the major documents for reference and guidance of future historians of Sikh history. Having been written by a contemporary scholar whose father and forefathers had participated in the major Khalsa crusades against the oppressors and having heard about the not-so-distant historical events from his elders in the best oral tradition, he was the most qualified person to record the Sikh history for his British patrons. The major subject matter or the central thesis of this epic is the answer of its author to the foremost question of Captain Murray :

ਨੇ ਮਾਲੀ ਨੈ ਹਮ ਕਹਯੋ ਇਤਨੀ ਬਾਤ ਬਤਾਹੁ

ਸਿੰਘਨ ਪਾਯੋ ਰਾਜ ਕਿਮ, ਔ ਦੀਨੋ ਕਿਨ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੁ ॥

“Who bestowed the sovereignty on the Sikhs and how did they come to establish a sovereign Sikh state.”

To which its author replied :

ਤਿਸੈ ਬਾਤ ਮੈਂ ਐਸੇ ਕਹੀ, ਸਿੰਘਨ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਸ਼ਾਹਿ ਸੱਚੈ ਦਈ

ਮਰੀ ਕਹਯੋ ਸ਼ਾਹਿ ਸੱਚੈ ਕੋਇ ? ਅਸਾਂ ਕਹਯੋ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਨਾਨਕ ਜੋਇ ॥(੩੩)

.....

ਜਿਨ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਨਾਨਕ ਚਰਨ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਏ, ਤਿਨ ਮੈਂ ਸ਼ਕਤਿ ਇਤੀ ਭਈ ਆਏ

ਚਿੜੀਅਨ ਤੇ ਉਨ ਬਾਜ ਕੁਹਾਏ, ਛੇਲਨ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਸੇਰ ਤੁੜਾਏ ॥ (੩੭)

"The true Lord Himself bestowed Sovereignty on the Sikhs and Guru Nanak, the Divine embodiment is the true Lord who bestowed this Sovereignty and Statehood on the Sikhs."

#### AUTHENTICITY & SIGNIFICANCE

How authentic and valid is the narration of historical events in this epic, is a matter of research and further exploration. There are four different versions of this epic available in the market which are not very reliable and authentic. However, Dr Bhai Vir Singh prepared the first edition from the available handwritten manuscripts in 1914 and later on reproduced three more editions in 1939, 1952 and 1982, after thoroughly editing and revising it. Since no other manuscript or earlier record of this epic is available, Sikh History Research Board set up by SGPC has declared the fourth revised edition by Dr Bhai Vir Singh as the most authentic version of this comprehensive and informative epic of the Sikhs. The finely annotated version of this epic written in vernacular Punjabi by Dr Jeet Singh Sital of Punjabi University, Patiala under the supervision of Sikh History Research Board of SGPC is a valuable contribution and addition. A further elucidation and translation of this rare document into English for a worldwide readership is required. Due credit must also be given to the two British officers who, suspecting the authenticity of two Muslim versions of Sikh history, got this version prepared from a person who had the right credentials to record this history. Their keen interest and patronage of this work also puts a seal of authenticity and approval on this version of Sikh history. It needs further elucidation and research to bring out the essential elements of the rich Sikh heritage and point out any discrepancies which do not match with the well-established tenets of Sikhism and Sikh History.

To conclude in the words of Dr Jeet Singh Sital, "This 18<sup>th</sup> century epic is as central to the Sikh history as another epic, *Gur Parkash Suraj* is to the history of the Sikh Gurus."

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REFERENCES

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DARBAR-E-KHALSA

RAMESH SETH*

It is said that the 25th of December was actually the old Roman Feast of Sun. Jesus Christ was not born on 25th December, yet the day is celebrated as the Christmas day. By affixing Jesus' birthday on that feast, two birds have been killed with one stone; the old Roman festival has been given a new lease of life and Christ's birthday has become a popular festival without much effort.

In the same way, in Los Angeles, every year on 25th of December an organisation of the Sikhs, the Institute of Gurmat Studies, has been holding a function called Darbar-e-Khalsa, to celebrate that day as the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh *ji*, the tenth Guru. In any case, since in America Guru *ji*'s birthday is normally celebrated by the Sikhs on the nearest Sunday to the actual date, calculated as per the traditional Indian Calendar, then why not celebrate it on the 25th of December, when it is a public holiday for everyone, and most people can join the celebrations? For the last many years, a big *mela* (congregation) is being organized for that purpose. In December 2000, when we attended the *mela*, it was being held on the campus of the California Polytechnic, commonly called Cali-Poly.

This Darbar-e-Khalsa is held every year to celebrate the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last Sikh Guru, the founder of the Khalsa. Thinking about him the thing which most strikes to my mind is the birth of the Khalsa itself and the consequences of that historic step. Guru Nanak had laid the foundation of Sikhism and Guru Gobind Singh made the Sikhs into a Khalsa. He gave the Sikhs their present identity and turned them into a martial race. In the entire human history, there are very few defining moments which become

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forever etched in the collective consciousness of mankind. Surely, the birth of the Khalsa is one of them.

On that Baisakhi day, on 30th of March of the year 1699 (following old Julian calendar), at Anandpur Sahib, after working on a carefully thought out plan, Guru Gobind Singh finally administered *Khande ka Pabul* to the *Panj Pyare* and to the others present. He called it *Amrit* (nectar). With that one sip of *Amrit*, a new life was infused into a near moribund Indian people; a new purpose was given to the life of an enslaved nation; and a new idea was born that changed the world-view of an entire people. Those moribund people were well on the way to becoming a martial race, 'The Khalsas'. The Guru thus transfused his own *Tej* (personality) into his followers.

There are these famous lines that are read and revered by all Sikhs:

Agya bhai Akal ki tabhi chalayo Panth

Here Guru *ji* had clearly indicated that it was the 'Divine Will' that he should form the Khalsa Panth and he had done so. It is not a farfetched claim either. When we visited Abbotsford, earlier on that trip, I found the strongest backing of it in a Souvenir published by the 'Kalgidhar Darbar Gurdwara' of Abbotsford (Canada) on the occasion of the 300th anniversary celebrations of the creation of the Khalsa. We all know the names of the *Panj Pyare*. But in that Souvenir they translated those five names into English. That makes an interesting reading and clearly proves divine intervention in the entire proceedings of that Baisakhi day.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| 1. Daya Singh | Kindness |
| 2. Dharam Singh | Duty |
| 3. Himmat Singh | Courage |
| 4. Mohkam Singh | Obedience |
| 5. Sahib Singh | Authority |

Look at it in another way. These are the very five attributes of the Khalsa, said that article in that souvenir!

Again, look at the call of the Tenth Master. He calls for volunteers to offer their heads: no compulsion, no show of authority. The Guru is seeking something from his followers. The entire self-sacrifice was to be on a voluntary basis. That is what sets that initiation ceremony apart from the formation of other Panths and other religions. If

someone is made to do something against his will, he would sooner or later rebel against it. But if done voluntarily, one is bound forever. By seeking volunteers, Guru *ji* had forever bound them to the Khalsa.

He did all that and much more for his people. But what did he get in return? His entire life was full of sacrifices, one after the other. When he was born, for the first few years he did not enjoy any paternal love, as his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, was away to Eastern India on his missionary work. At the age of nine, he finally lost his father in circumstances which are to this date remembered as an example of unparalleled sacrifice to uphold the rights of other religionists to wear their holy marks: the *janeu* and the *tilak*. Later, the 10th Guru lost his four young sons, two in the battlefield and two were bricked alive. He also lost his old mother at the hands of heartless butchers. Finally, he was stabbed and mortally wounded, resulting in his eventual passing away. But, for a person like Guru Gobind Singh, all those tragedies were ephemeral. Upholding of the *Dharma* was more important. To be a pillar of strength to his followers was paramount.

My mind reflected back to the time, when after the battle of Chamkaur, Guru Gobind Singh *ji* spent a night in the forest, sleeping on the forest floor. It was then that he narrated his masterly poem *Mittar Pyare*. Remarkably, even in that composition, there is no complaint to God for his present condition, just an outpouring of heart. There has to be something of a divine quality in a person to be elevated to Godhood. Certainly, Guru Gobind Singh *ji* had a lot of it.

There is still another aspect to this. Guru *ji* had the divine mission to form the Khalsa Panth. He called his followers to Anandpur Sahib on that Baisakhi day. Then he called out (to his followers) for the ultimate sacrifice: “their heads.” How is it that the five, among all his followers, who answered Guru *ji*’s call, happened to be from five different parts of India? How is it that of those beloved five, there were no two persons from the same area? If some one wants to ignore this aspect then it is a mistake. But for those who want to seek a deeper meaning into that cosmic drama, the entire sequence of events is amazing, to say the least. People of all the parts of India took part in the formation of the Khalsa.

These were some of my thoughts when we reached Cali-Poly to take part in the celebrations of the birth anniversary of “Dashmesh

Pita.” The parking yard was full of cars and MUV’s. It was 11 am. We left the car and walked towards the auditorium where *kirtan* was being recited. It was, as I had said earlier, a grand *mela*. The auditorium could hold only a thousand people. Many thousands more were spread all around the campus ground.

The programme had started at 6 am with *Parbhat Pheri*. People had started pouring in that early. The *mela* too had started early in the morning with *Asa di Var*, rendered by eminent *raagis*. It set the right mood of devotion. Thereafter, since early morning the *kirtan* was going on. Apart from the *kirtan*, there was an equally important function, that of giving recognition to eminent Sikhs by giving them *man-patras* (testimonials). By the year 2000, there were many Sikhs in America, some of them worthy of social recognition. By honouring them, the Darbar-e-Khalsa brought them to the notice of the widespread Sikh community.

Outside the auditorium, near the gate, there were stalls, serving food, even at 11 A.M. Looking at the spread of various foodstuffs, sandwiches, *samosas*, and three types of *mithai*, I had to acknowledge that there was rather an elaborate *langar* service. There were long queues of people, who were being served at three counters. Separate counters for tea/coffee and soft drinks were also there.

Next to it, on both sides of a small paved internal road of Cali-Poly, there were stalls selling various nick-nacks. There were mainly religious books, pictures, and tapes of music and boxes. In short, everything except food. Sikhs don’t sell food in a *mela*. They enjoin the *sangat* to enjoy the eatables and soft drinks for free.

The organizers could not have chosen a better time to hold the *mela* than December 25th, when the Southern Californian sun is at its mellowest. It was a joy to be outdoors. Blue sky, cool breeze and shining sun created an atmosphere, which reminded the *sangat* of the winter season of Punjab. To be reminded of Punjab, over five thousand Sikhs collect at Cali-Poly. People had assembled there with their entire families. They had come to enjoy this one-day get-together. On the vast spread of the Cali-Poly lawns, families were sitting on the grass; small children frolicked around, while the grown up merely lazed in the sun; a fine holiday for everyone.

This *mela* reminded me of the other *mela* at Yuba City that we

had attended three months earlier. Even there the *sangat* had asssembled from far and wide. There were people from as far as Arizona on one side and Washington DC on the other side. Twenty-two years ago, even the Yuba City *mela* must have been of a comparable size only. Over the years, the event had grown. I am sure that with time even the Darbar-e-Khalsa will become a prominent annual event in California.

It was, when the service at the earlier food counters stopped and fresh counters were set up at a distance that I realized that what was being served till then was only the breakfast. The *Guru ka langar* had yet to start the lunch service. And that was no less elaborate.

At 2 pm. a procession was taken out — The *Aswari* of Maharaj *ji* — signalling the end of *kirtan* and the formal programme. The surprise event for us was that the *Aswari* of Maharaj *ji* was taken back to the Darbar in a helicopter, amidst chants of *Satnam Waheguru*. That also marked the conclusion of the celebrations.

□

*He alone has recognised the Right Way
Who eats from what he earns through toil
And shares his earnings
With those in need.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1245

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥਹੁ ਦੇਇ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ ॥

**MAJ GEN (DR) JASWANT SINGH AVSM
– AN OBITUARY –**

KIRPAL SINGH*

*Na rok sake, na pakad sake daman
Bade karib se uth kar chala gaya koyee*

Sudden and untimely passing away of Maj Gen (Dr) Jaswant Singh, AVSM on the 3rd of July 2005 has left a void in the hearts of Chandigarh citizens who will miss him for his long and meritorious services. He was very actively involved in social services for medical help to the poor and the needy. He regularly went to the Veterans Polyclinic at Mohali to treat patients every Wednesday and to Gurdwara Sector 34 clinic every Tuesday.

Born in 1934 in the district Sargodha (west Punjab) he passed his MBBS from Medical college, Amritsar and Masters in Surgery and Urology from PGI Chandigarh. He was the first urologist in the Army Medical Corps. He was recipient of Chief of Army Staff Card for his distinguished services. He was also awarded Ati Visisht Sewa Medal. He served the army for 35 years and retired as Deputy Director Medical Services Western Command Chandimandir in 1993. After his retirement he involved himself in social service – gave free medical service to the needy. He was General Secretary of the Institute of Sikh Studies where he used to visit everyday. He also was interested in Gurmat Parsar Society.

Gen Jaswant Singh used to contribute articles to *The Tribune* as well as *Abstract of Sikh Studies*, the journal of Institute of Sikh Studies of which he was the Associate Editor. For every Gurburb, he would prepare a fresh speech to be delivered to the congregation at Sector 34 Gurdwara. In every way he was a soldier saint. He used to take ex-

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army men to Western Command Hospital for examination, and personally attended to the poor and needy for their medical treatment.

He would refer the poor patients to those specialists or clinics for testing etc. with whom he had some understanding and who would charge a nominal fee. One of the employees of Institute of Sikh Studies had a serious problem of cancer, Maj Gen Jaswant Singh got him admitted in the hospital in Sector 32 and supervised the operation personally. Though he could not survive, but he did his best to save his life. In several cases Maj Gen Jaswant Singh paid the expenses personally.

In the medical conferences at PGI, Chandigarh as well as in the Western Command Hospital, Chandimandir, he was usually asked to preside over one or the other sessions.

He will be long remembered for his meritorious services and his contributions to the various organizations and individuals.

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*They alone are truly detached (Bairagi)
Who are attached to the Name of God
And see the Truest of the True
At all times and in all things.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 945

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤੇ ਬੈਰਾਗੀ,
ਇਬ ਤਬ ਸਾਚੇ ਸਾਚਾ ॥

ABSTRACTS

FRAGMENTS OF HALF A CENTURY

AN ABSTRACT BY KHARAK SINGH

Author : S Karnail Singh

Publisher : Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh

Price : 500/-; Pages 543+25

Preparing an abstract of this unique volume has been a pleasure and a privilege both because of its contents and its author. The wealth of historical information packed into it is amazing. Going through its pages gives one the feeling of riding H G Wells' *Time Machine* that takes one deep into the 20th Century and stops at places where most interesting things are happening. One observes history in the making. And the author is not merely pilot of this machine, he is an active participant in the fateful events.

This chronicle by Sardar Karnail Singh is a compendium of about 90 articles and letters, some written in response to recent happenings, others, as rejoinders and correctives to the malicious and deliberately twisted historical facts and still others as plain narratives. Through these pieces, he has forcefully contradicted reports by such well-known authors/columnists as Arun Shourie, Khushwant Singh, Justice H R Khanna, a former Supreme Court Judge, K F Rustamji, a former top bureaucrat and a reputed columnist, veteran author and Sikh theologian Dr Trilochan Singh, a highly placed former Civil Servant who used derogatory epithets for Sikh heroes in his writings, and some other literary stalwarts, including Ottawa-based top columnist David Warren and Indian Embassy diplomats. He fought, though unsuccessfully, a six month long battle against one of Khushwant's historically incorrect and offensive articles in the *Illustrated Weekly* of Bombay, in the Press Council of India. In fact, his *Anglo-Sikh Wars* is a virtual rebuttal of what Sir Winston Churchill in his *History of English-Speaking Peoples*,

Vol. IV, p. 65, had recorded as to the causes and other episodes during the wars between the British and the Sikhs during 1845-49. His exposure as an eyewitness of a blatant lie by the RSS and its cohorts at Amritsar in honouring 600 of its bogus workers for their supposed attack and dispersal of the Muslim National Guards in March 1947, when they had reached near Darbar Sahib to demolish it like Abdali, was timely and an eyeopener as to how the Hindutva is in desperate hurry to rewrite bogus history. There are some biographical columns like that of Thomas Jefferson, an epitome of genius and human wisdom, and other heroes of matchless daring and piety like Brig. Pritam Singh of Poonch, AVM Harjinder Singh, Jathedar Jhabbar and Prof Jagjit Singh. There are comprehensive pieces regarding Guru Gobind Singh Ji, 300 years of Khalsa Celebrations and Maharaja Ranjit Singh's bicentenary, history of Sikh Gurdwaras, its Reform Movement, All India Gurdwaras Bill, Anglo-Sikh Wars, Apostasy amongst the Sikh Youth, Memorial to Maharani Jindan, Punjab Agriculture, The Punjab Termination of Agreements Act, 2004, and about many other past and current episodes. Some letters were written on Panthic and public matters with constructive suggestions to Jathedar Akal Takht, late Jathedar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, former Chief Ministers Parkash Singh Badal and Surjit Singh Barnala, late Prime Minister Narsimha Rao, former US President Bill Clinton, Former Canadian Secretary of State (Far East) David Kilgour, Former Defence Minister of India George Fernandes, Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh, historians Dr Ganda Singh and Dr Fauja Singh, and recently to the Indian National Congress President, Madam Sonia Gandhi.

Besides, there is a 61 page Epilogue, where Sardar Karnail Singh studiously discusses, quoting references, several aspects of Indian polity and some Punjab events, in great detail such as – Independence and Partition of India, Tibet and Indo-China War, Kashmir imbroglio, a bird's eye view of Indian top leadership, including how Pt Nehru manoeuvred his daughter Indira Gandhi's succession as Prime Minister through the *Kamraj Plan*, corruption and inefficiency at National level, imposition of emergency in 1975 and the Gujarat communal holocaust. Also, he ruefully dilates on the Govt. policy of distrust and downgrading of the Army personnel vis-à-vis the civilian bureaucrats in the Order of Precedence, for it is the Defence forces that keep the

country from falling apart. Krishna Menon's appointment as Defence Minister to implement this flawed policy brought discredit to India, dishonour to Indian army and ignominy to Menon himself. President Radha Krishnan calls Menon *a diseased mind*. Punjab episodes cover, a happy and prosperous Punjab before partition and then as its sequence turned into killing fields of long knives and later became a bread bowl of starving India and was finally sucked into the chaotic whirlpool of SYL Canal controversy. It includes the painful catalogue of betrayal of Sikhs since 1947 such as formation of Punjabi Suba, patronage of heretic sects, Damdami Taksal, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, Dharm Yudh Morcha, Bhindranwale phenomenon, the unholy Operation Blue Star and its aftermath, a decade of Sikh youth genocide when, according to Inderjit Singh Jaijee, two lakh people in Punjab perished, and how former Chief Minister Darbara Singh lit the first communal fire in Punjab by stealthily throwing some heads of dead cows in a Hindu Temple at Amritsar and its aftermath.

This epilogue is a systematic account of some of the most important events of the 20th Century India, and adds to the significance and relevance of earlier chapters which might otherwise appear incoherent. Matters relating to Punjab and the treatment meted to Sikhs in the post-partition India receive special attention. Causes of unrest among the Sikhs have been highlighted. The lesson is clear – A strong and united India can be built only on the foundation of justice and fair treatment to Sikhs and other minorities, as Lord Acton, in his *Essays On Freedom* had recorded, "The most certain test by which we judge whether a country is really free is the amount of security enjoyed by minorities."

Lastly, Sardar Karnail Singh has written a postscript. Earlier, he imagined a dark future for the country in view of the various aspects explained earlier, particularly Operation Blue Star, demolition of Babri Masjid, lingering unrest and tensions in the far off East, Kashmir and Punjab and genocidal episodes of minorities in Punjab, Gujarat and elsewhere. But now he deems the emergence of Madam Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh the humane and world-famous economist, a Cambridge Product, as a divine intervention for at least some rectification of past aberrations, for God has His own ways of doing things in the Universe.

There are 17 Annexures in the volume, each telling a different, if sordid tale. For instance, Annexure II is about the fictitious Ram Janambhoomi temple at Ayodhya, No III is a 20-page indictment of former Chief Minister Darbara Singh by the Punjab Congress Legislative party in a meeting held on March 6, 1983, at Chandigarh, for his Govt.'s misdeeds, especially for his having lit the first communal fire in Punjab with its deadly fallout during the next decade. No IV, shows the power of Brahmins in usurping 35-73% plum positions in all the branches of administration in Govt. of India, although they are only 3.5% of the total population. No V, depicts the brutality of the regime through the mutilated body of Aytar Singh of Shatrana. Nos. VI and VII show the stark difference how soliders, the real national heroes who shed their blood for their country's defense, are treated in India and in the West. Nos. IX and X, reveal the general characteristics of the British people at large. Nos. XI, XII and XIII explain the miserable tale of exploitation of Punjab river waters. No. XIV contains the testament published in 1925 by the Hindu Theologian Lala Hardyas as to how Hindu race can only be saved by conquering and converting to the Hindu religion all the people in North-West of India, now Pakistan and Afghanistan. Otherwise, it was useless to win Swaraj.

All in all, the Annexures bring out some important but less well known facts in the mine of information in the book.

Sir Penderel Moon, ICS once Deputy Commissioner Amritsar recorded, "This holy city is the religious and political capital of Sikh nation." Sardar Karnail Singh imagines that his long stint 1939 – 48, as a district official there and working in close collaboration with the then Sikh leadership, particularly during the Partition days in providing food, accommodations and clothing to the millions of tormented and humiliated refugees pouring into the district all the twenty four hours for months together through the Wagha Border, as if he had had a brush with history. This holocaust with its train of human suffering and misery on such a vast scale entered his soul and sharpened his thought process. He began reading history and other Sikh literature. In course of time, he began writing brief pieces and then wrote his thoroughly researched *Anglo-Sikh Wars* which was published by the SGPC, Amritsar. His penchant for spread of knowledge regarding

Sikh Religion, Culture and History and about their glorious past became a passion with him, and which continues unabated, even when he has crossed his 92nd year, is highly praiseworthy. He sent at his expense his *Anglo-Sikh Wars* (English & Punjabi) and his *Jathedar Kartar Singh Jhabbar – Life & Times* (English translation) and other writings to one and all including President and Vice President of India, Governors, Maharajas, top Army Brass, Vice Chancellors of Universities, Ambassadors, University Professors down to the village teacher. I have read more than a hundred replies in appreciation and thankfulness received from the above said dignitaries. One such reply from former Ambassador Col. Naranjan Singh Gill is worth quoting, “Many thanks for the book *Anglo-Sikh Wars*, with your autograph... My body, my mind, my heart, my soul weep going through the story so well put, fate had decreed for the Prince Maharaja Duleep Singh, Noble Maharani Jindan and the brave Khalsa. He alone knows His ways...” Another such letter from an unknown admirer in the West is placed as Annexure XV which speaks volumes. In the same vein, former Canadian Federal Minister Herb Dhaliwal wrote, “I am writing to express my sincere thanks for writing such an excellent article on the Future Of America. I read it with great interest, and it certainly made me take time to stop and think of the future of India and the natural greed of mankind. It is people such as yourself that will help make this country a better place for our children and our children’s children. I would greatly appreciate if you would continue to send me your publications”.

S Karnail Singh’s writings are genuine and authentic. As the author himself notes, every piece in the volume is one step closer to the truth, for, it is an attempt at honest retelling of some tragic parts of recent Indian history. Each writing in the book is self-contained. The entire work pieced together is a kaleidoscope of events of half a century showing a downhill march of the Indian polity. The book is for the young and for the old, for the students and the teachers, as also for the intellectuals and the ordinary folks. It is, thus, a valuable addition to the existing literature. In fact, nobody genuinely interested in the history of the Twentieth Century Punjab can afford to ignore S. Karnail Singh’s version. And with time, recognition of this book as a primary source will grow.

Pictures, photographs and cartoons are the most expressive form

of depicting the spirit, emotions, and events of an era. For instance, cartoon showing the pre-partition Muslim League of India bidding goodbye to constitutionalism and resorting to Direct Action, pictures showing the refugee caravans entering from Pakistan and the enthusiastic 300 years Khalsa celebrations by the Sikh diaspora in the West, tell far more than what words can convey. There are about twenty pictures, photos and cartoons which would greatly enhance the value of the book.

S Karnail Singh shared the initiative for setting up the Institute of Sikh Studies, as a founder member. Although, he later migrated to Canada, his interest in the objectives of the Institute did not diminish. He continued to provide his much-needed valuable support in the struggle against the malicious propaganda of adversaries of Sikh religion and culture, on the western front. Presently, he is also a contributor to the worldwide forum, Learning-Zone with about its 2100 participants having scholarly aptitudes from New Zealand and Australia to UK and North America. His usual refrain is highlighting of Sikh values and contradiction of erroneous writings.

I have known S Karnail Singh since 1947, and watched with admiration his performance initially as a District Panchayat Officer in Amritsar district, where the *sarpanches* looked to him as a friend, philosopher and guide in the real sense, and later as a Senior Executive and Planner at the state level looking after rural development work with his boundless energy, extraordinary sensitivity of mind, a rare degree of commitment to duty and devotion to noble deeds. He has been a role model to many I know. At 92, he is still going strong. He has discovered the secret of staying young in old age : purity of thought, word and deed. And he is practising it.

In 1859, Sir Robert Cust recorded, "*Punjab is the original Sikh land, the cradle of Sikh faith and the nursery of chivalry of the Sikh Gurus.*" In some ways, this image of Punjab remained steeped in the author's psyche while writing this chronicle.

S Karnail Singh is a familiar figure in academic circles. He handles English language with an amazing felicity. His inimitable style of writing, the depth of analysis, and the range of topics covered with deep personal involvement, leave no doubt that his book will receive an enthusiastic welcome.

THE ARMCHAIR SIKH

A REVIEW BY HARDEV SINGH*

Author : Gajinder Singh

Publisher : Mrs Manbir G Singh, Mohali

Pages : 186; Price : Rs. 220/- (paperback), 285/- (Deluxe)

Sardar Gajinder Singh is a prolific writer and may be counted amongst one of the few creative writers of Sikh literature. He has completed the trilogy of his critical essays on Sikhism by publishing three books during the past three years. I had the privilege to review his book *In the Witches' Cauldron* for *The Sikh Review* and *Abstracts of Sikh Studies* last year. From a professional in an Oil Company, Gajinder Singh has worn the mantle of a professional writer after his retirement.

I was fascinated by the title of the book *The Armchair Sikh* and the cover design of the book by Sukirat Singh, an artist son of the author. I have been familiar with the term 'armchair philosopher' but never heard this exotic term 'armchair Sikh' and hence my curiosity to read the chapter with this title to understand and appreciate the critical approach of the learned author. The author states: "There are armchair politicians, armchair socialists, armchair preachers and armchair critics. Such people like to raise issues in order to impress others of their knowledge and study, with the primary aim to clinch the lime-light of notoriety-based publicity".

The author is highly critical of McLeodian School of Writers (without naming them) and their analytical approach to Sikh studies. On page 83 of this chapter, he writes: "The western scholar keeps two targets in view with one shot. He has shown his impatience and ignorance with Divine experience and disregarded the spiritual intensity

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of the Guru's concern. In stead of rising to the spiritual level of the Guru's erudition, he exploits the common armchair Sikhs' ineptitude by instigating them to look at matters of divinity from their level of mundane reasoning, in order to confuse the issue. The western writers found it easy to transplant Guru Nanak and his successors in place of Jesus and his apostles, keeping the basic format intact." Again on page 88, he is highly critical of the approach adopted by the western writers to Sikh Gurus: "The study of Guru Nanak – born Hindu, Nanak – in History, Nanak – the man, Nanak – the God, Nanak – the Prophet tows the same line as was adopted to lay bare Jesus – the son of God, Jesus – the Jew, Jesus – the man, Jesus – in History".

The author laments that the real purpose of Gursikhi is lost while the armchair Sikh and his colleague, the ever-doubting critic, make mountain of a mole hill. The problem with the Sikhs stems from the distortions created by ill-groomed *granthis* and *babas* of popular *deras* in Punjab and elsewhere. In fact, Guru Nanak chose to call his followers by the nomenclature of the Sikh, a disciple perpetually engaged in advancement of his mental faculties, with no room for dogmatic speculation as in the ancient religions.

In the chapter "Divine and Mundane", the author differentiates between the spiritual realm and the material world of man. He has shown his vast knowledge of other belief systems for the liberation of man. For the sake of comparison, the author recounts: "Buddhist and Jain systems acknowledge that man's good and bad actions are inadvertently mixed up with their good and bad rewards. The holy *Qoran* has assurance of rewards for the faithful after judgement on Doomsday, while the Indian theory of transmigration holds out a distant green light, provided the person keeps on the right track. Sikhism, however, promises total deliverance here and now, all previous records obliterated by total obedience and surrender of *haume*, the ego (I-ness)".

On page 103 of this book, the author demonstrates his grasp of Sikh ideals: "Guru Nanak did not dwell strictly on any one formula but counselled people to be truthful, honest in their dealings, remain good citizens and actively serve the society to which they belonged. He denounced the corrupt political and social administration, vicious officials, greedy and ruthless rulers, a familiar scenario to us in the modern age."

“Elements of Idolatry in Sikhism” is another valuable chapter of this book. The author brings out clearly the message of Sikh Gurus in unambiguous terms. Guru Nanak’s total rejection of the prevalent Hindu religion and its rituals was a revolutionary step in Indian society. The author deplores that many historians and scholars of comparative religion fail to understand the import of Sikh religion and its revolutionary tendencies, and interpret it as a mere synthesis of Hindu and Muslim beliefs. The author considers it a derailment of Sikhism by vested interests (page 149) : “With the usurpation of their Gurudwaras by Brahmins and *Udasis*, whatever was discarded about the old dogmas and rituals, became reinforced and brought back into practice. It was then claimed that there was no difference in the Sikh point of view from the Hindu mainstream. Brahminical priests and *Udasis* did their utmost to dilute the intellectual base of the Sikh dogma by reintroducing the role of priestly class and encouraging blind following in the *sangat*. As matters stand today, those Sikhs, aping the ancient religious traditions, may revere Guru Granth more in form than in spirit.”

Some of the other noteworthy chapters of this book on which I focused my attention are: Meditation: Call of the Divine, Man and God, Discipline and Free will – A Paradox, Importance of Identity to the Sikhs, and I, Me, Mine: An Introduction. In all these chapters, the author advocates the superiority of the Sikh dogma *vis-a-vis* other dogmas, both of the East and the West. The author cautions the Sikhs to maintain their separate religious and cultural identity intact (page 55): “Sikhs are located in a Hindu majority dominated country that is subtly nibbling at their roots to envelope them. Under such compelling conditions which continue to harass the Sikhs on their philosophy, culture and their very existence, Identity, as formulated by Guru Gobind Singh, remains a dire necessity.”

In the introductory chapter of the book, I find the author somewhat lopsided in his criticism of the Western world. He considers the western method, education and technology faulty and even barbaric which has dehumanised the society. He acclaims the superiority of Eastern methodology to unravel the nature of reality. The author may not be aware of the paradigm shift in Western methodology during the recent years under different nomenclatures, viz; Post-modern

interpretation of Reality, Holistic approach, Science-religion dialogue and globalization. I wonder why he believes in the dictum: “East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet”, as advocated by the English poet (Rudyard Kipling).

I congratulate the author for his consistent approach in all the three books. Essay writing is the most difficult task and it demands a vast study of scriptures, literature, philosophy and history. The author displays his skill in handling such a wide range of phenomenology by his erudite scholarship. The rendering of Gurbani text into English is so convincing that the reader feels intoxicated by his translation and transliteration.



*The singing of Your praise
In which my soul bathes constantly,
Is for me pilgrimage to Benares
And washing in the holy Ganges.
For, true bathing lies
In the constant cherishing of
One's love for God.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 358

ਗੰਗ ਬਨਾਰਸਿ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਤੁਮਾਰੀ ਨਾਵੈ ਆਤਮ ਰਾਉ ॥
ਸਚਾ ਨਾਵਨੁ ਤਾਂ ਥੀਐ ਜਾਂ ਅਹਿਨਿਸਿ ਲਾਗੈ ਭਾਉ ॥

REMOVAL OF TURBAN IN FRANCE

– SIKHS' STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN DIGNITY –

A REVIEW BY G S CHEEMA*

Author : M S Rabi

Publisher : Singh Legal Foundation, Chandigarh

Edition : 2005

Pages : 105; Price : Rs. 245/-

In France – and it applies equally to the rest of Continental Europe, a Sikh is virtually unknown. Not that there are too few of them; in that vast under-class of shadowy ‘illegals’ or refugees (whether real or of convenience) there are any number of them, but most (like the Sikhs at home) have shorn their hair and given up their turbans. The few that have remained loyal to this symbol of their faith are, ironically enough, assumed to be Muslims, often by other Muslims as well. During a short stay of one year in France, I was often greeted by ‘Maghrebi’ or Sahelian Muslims from North Africa with a hearty *Al-Salaam Aleikum!* While I had no inhibitions about reciprocating appropriately – after all ‘Peace be on you!’ sounds much better than the banal *bon jour* – people would be often confused when I failed to respond to further attempts at conversation in Arabic, and tried to explain that I was neither a Muslim nor an Arab, but a Sikh and a ‘Hindi’, for India is still known as Hindi in the Arab world.

That was in the good old days when Europeans would sometimes also see a maharaja in a turbaned Sikh, but post-September the 11th, cold stares were more usual, and occasionally schoolchildren would try to bait me with cries of ‘Ossama! Ossama!’

Muslims from Black or White Africa, usually speaking some

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variety of Arabic are as commonplace in France as South Asians are in the UK, but while there has been no doubt always an undercurrent of hostility on the part of the native white French, it was quite different from the colour discrimination with which Indians, and even mixed-blood Anglo-Indians had to contend with in the UK or in old British India. In France, if a man speaks French and subscribes to the motto of the Revolution, he is accepted as French with minor reservations, and the French have somehow managed to teach their colonial subjects French remarkably well, and even a visit to Pondicherry today will bear this out. The French, like other Latins, have always aimed at cultural assimilation, and in their attempt to ban the turban, headscarves or ostentatiously large crucifixes, they are aiming at exactly the same. After all such distinctively foreign items of headgear or dress make a person stand out, and when they are coupled with a darker shade of skin-colour, the man or woman stands out as distinctively foreign. To be an 'outsider' is always uncomfortable, the French, by their lights are only being kind.

But the Tenth Guru, in his wisdom, blessed us with the five *kakars* which – if faithfully kept – make assimilation impossible. In India it makes no difference; with our innumerable castes, sects, and religions, besides infinite gradations of colour, variety is taken for granted, and assimilation in the French would be seen as a threat to the identity, *Vive la difference!* Would be our slogan. But in Europe where it was only after the bloody struggles of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation that the state reluctantly accepted that there could be other religious sects apart from Roman Catholicism or whatever variety of Protestantism which the ruler chose to recognize as 'established', such bewildering variety would seem positively subversive. In fact, atheism may seem preferable, and ever since the age of Voltaire and Rousseau, there has been a strong streak of anti-clericalism in France, which appeared to have triumphed with the great revolution, when *ersatz* quasi-religions like those of 'Reason' or the 'Supreme Being' threatened to eclipse Christianity.

There is probably more than a bit of the same streak of anti-clericalism in the new legislation, only this time it is directed more against Islamic orthodoxy, and Sikhism is the inadvertent victim. Possibly this may be just wishful thinking; for all we know it may be a

straightforward assault on Islam and Sikhism (with the crucifixes thrown in as a red herring). A continuation of the Crusades, which were after all mainly a French (or Frankish) enterprise.

Mr Rahi has in his short booklet made an appeal to the French sense of fair-play (of course Anglo-Saxons would scoff at the idea – the ‘frogs’ and ‘fairplay?’), and traditional tolerance of individualist idiosyncrasy. Voltaire, Rousseau and Napoleon have been duly quoted – and I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the great savant Andre Malraux was aware of our existence, and we have in fact been noticed in his *Anti-Memoirs*! Perhaps more to the point are the European Convention on Human Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other conventions of the United Nations or the European Union, some of which have been included among the appendices. The strange case of Sardar Darshan Singh, formerly Michel Rudel, is particularly illustrative of a certain mentality. I believe there are similar restrictions on the choice of possible first names in several other European countries. A pleasant contrast is the enlightened reasonableness of the debate on the turban in the House of Lords in the United Kingdom which took place in 1976 — the subject being whether Sikhs should be exempt from the legislation making the use of a helmet compulsory while riding motor-cycles.

I would have thought that notwithstanding the stories of English eccentricity, on the whole the French were more broadminded and tolerant of individualist non-conformism. All the great movements of modern art, for instance – so different from the sterile classicism of the conservative academies which represented the popular art of the times – had their origins in France. It is a pity that today, however, France should be identified with such a retrograde and reactionary piece of legislation. I personally feel that the same arguments would apply equally in defence of headscarves and *hijab* as well, but it may be unwise to make a frontal attack on so wide a front. Our limited concern is for the turban, and here Mr Rahi has done a signal service. If our cause is ultimately successful, this little book might well claim some credit. For, as the poet said:

*Little drops of water; and little grains of sand,
Go to make the ocean, and the mighty land.*

SIKH PANTH – *NAVEN YUG DE SANMUKH* (PUNJABI)

A REVIEW BY GURCHARAN SINGH*

Author : Dr Gurmit Singh Sidhu

Publishers : Abad Prakashan, Patiala

Pages 240; Price : Rs. 195/-

INTRODUCTION

This book is based on the study by the author for Ph D degree and has been presented with minor improvements. The aim is to understand how the Sikh community in Punjab is facing up to the world-wide trend of modernization, which is supported forcefully by Government and private organization with capitalistic system which, by its nature, encourages profit making, inequality, exploitation, use of economic power, inherent injustice, these are directly opposite to Sikh values of spiritual pursuit, honest work and sharing fruits of labour.

The study involved a survey of village Sur Singh near Amritsar of predominantly Sikh population historically associated with Sikh Gurus and devout Sikhs ever since, and is therefore a typical village for such study. The author has out-lined historical and geographical location of the village, its social structure, religion, beliefs, modern facilities now existing and its eminent personalities. Then data is used for discussion in subsequent chapters on economics, politics, life-style, challenges and conflicts of modernization and concluding dialogue with the Panth.

TERM ‘MODERNIZATION’

Before actually discussing the data, a chapter on conceptual background of “modernization” is given. This is on Western model, full of jargon and pertaining to situation mostly relevant to Europe

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and Western world. The lay reader can safely skip major portion of this chapter without losing anything of the main study. The last para of this chapter on modernization in India is, to some extent, relevant.

MODERN ECONOMY

Modernization of economy and its effects on Sikhs actually started during the British period, but it speeded up after Independence. Use of tractors, improved seeds, fertilizers and pesticides became a part of modern agriculture. The Green revolution as a result, increased the income of farmers immediately and it became market driven. It profoundly affected the attitude and life of Sikh community and money became the important factor.

Apart from agriculture, many changes occurred in the traditional trades and crafts of various sub-groups who were dependent on agriculture and they adopted other employment avenues for better prospects. For example, farm labour (mostly Mazhabis) have now adopted contract labour, small jobs; black-smiths and carpenters who were making traditional farm tools are now engaged in making tractor-trolley parts, threshers, fabricated door grills for houses, etc.; tailors now have adopted better fashionable designs of clothes after seeing TV and fashion magazines. Similarly, there is a change in design of jewelry by the village goldsmiths. This trend increased their incomes even better than average farmers, who are mostly Jats.

The Green revolution brought economic well being in its first flush, but there being no industrial back-up to utilize increased farm output, it gave away to a non-productive life-style with more stress on housing, marriages, entertainment, gadgets for comforts, transport, etc. Later, stagnation in agricultural output on account of Govt control of price of the produce, increasing cost of fertilizers, pesticides, agricultural implements and machinery, caused disturbing effects, as demands for increased cost of living could not be met. This brought the Sikhs in conflict with those controlling the markets and also brought fissures among themselves particularly among big and small farmers. Conflicts among social groups and family also occurred because of increasing stress on money rather than on human relationships.

POLITICS & MODERNIZATION

On the political front, Sikhism has always been for *Halemi Raj*

(Benign Government) with liberty of the individual, equality, honest work, respect for womanhood, freedom from oppression, etc. This had brought the community in conflict with the Mughal empire, and sacrifices were made by the Gurus and many devout Sikhs to uphold its values. Banda Singh Bahadur brought about a major change in distributing land to the tillers. *Rakhi* system of the Misl, and *Sarbat Khalsa* tradition of decision-making to some extent carried forward their views. But with Ranjit Singh's *raj* the question of high and low, casteism, avarice raised their ugly heads. Still in the villages, control and power to dispense justice remained with *panchayats*. The simple and traditional mode of government during Sikh *raj* could not be consolidated as no formal constitution was drafted on Sikh principles.

With the coming of the British, the administration, revenue, judicial system, communication, railways, army and police there was more stress to administer law and exploit the produce of the colony in India than to share power and do welfare acts for the countrymen.

For Sikhs things did not change after Independence. Control went to the majority community because of the democratic electoral system. Identity for the Sikhs and Punjabi language always remained with them highly sensitive points, but the ruling class never seriously considered this so. On the other hand, they indirectly encouraged splinter groups such as Nirankaris, Radha Swomis, Namdharis and others at the cost of annoying main body of the Sikh community. Also, they did very little to prevent media, particularly TV in presenting a biased view of the members of the community. This has brought the Sikhs in confrontation with the state and central governments leading to *morchas* organized by Akalis who predominantly represent Sikh farmers. The oppressive way in which their *morchas* were dealt with, gave rise to militancy in eighties and early nineties. Actually, Sikh community was always left at a disadvantage even when they participated politically in the national scene, their urge to acquire more political power became ever increasing. This is the main and strong cause of discontentment amongst them.

Some facts must be understood regarding politics facing Sikhs. First, the Sikh representatives refused to sign the draft Constitution because of insufficient safeguards for minorities. Secondly, after independence, the rulers were obsessed with the doubt that Sikhs

like Muslims may **not** want a separate state. Therefore, even their genuine demands of status to Punjabi language and areas to be included in Punjabi Suba, control of river water, and hydroelectric power plants, etc, were not agreed to gracefully.

EFFECTS ON LIFE STYLE

Now to come to the challenges and life style brought about by modernization. There is a change in geographic locations of areas of activity such as get-togethers, marriages far away from neighbourhood in the village as a unity. Migration of some abroad or to urban areas has brought better housing along village circular roads or main through farses and interiors of villages look like ruins. Secondly, many farmers have left farming and have adopted trade, govt jobs and technical jobs in industry. Supporting categoric such as black-smiths carpenters, and farm labour have gone out for business and technical/artisan jobs.

The hold of caste particularly against Mazhabis has loosened a bit specially during religious gatherings and in gurdwaras, but Jat Sikhs are conscious of their superiority and their attitude still shows this. This is against Sikh principles. Thirdly, the joint family system is breaking up. The respect for the opinion and guidance of the elders is diminishing, as the young with technical or business skill no longer need their advice. More and more small nucleus families have decentralized the pattern of hold and decision-making in the family.

There is a distinct change in matters of marriages with better transport and communication, choice is wider and people are not bound by proximity or restriction of 'gotras'. Now suitable match is important. What is worse, however, is large gatherings, lavish expenditure on a host of new ceremonies because of affluence of big farmers and tendency by others to copy them.

The tendency towards divorce is also disturbing. Mostly it is due to demands for more dowry, weaker hold of religion for a life-long union and access to law for separation.

Modernization has brought change in thinking also. There is more stress on education of girls, in adopting new farming techniques and small industry associated with this, more stress on planning for any activity, stress on punctuality, search for better jobs even away from home. This is positive.

Attitude towards religion has also changed. Instead of its pursuit for inner peace, it has become a show business to flaunt wealth and influence. Gurdwara buildings have become large with more facilities with costly building material and control of these has become a source of social and political advancement.

The weakening of religious hold has shown another tendency – cutting of hair, trimming or shaving of beards amongst Sikh youngmen. Urban girls are also involved in showing disrespect to hair. The effect of TV has changed the role model for the young. They want to look smart and modern to go ahead with lucrative jobs as they think that the ruling class, mostly comprising of majority community do not like separate identity of Sikhs. This is specially so after the death of Sant Bhindranwale and failure of religious upsurge which had given the '*kesb*', '*Amrit chhakna*' importance because of acceptance amongst masses. The author has reasoned that the rise of militancy was in fact a reaction to modernization in which Sikh community was left out with disadvantage, discrimination, injustice as, for example, in matters of control of waters, Punjabi language, Punjabi-speaking areas left out. Worse still, it was treated as merely a law & order situation without solving it properly. Initially, there was sympathy for idealist aim of the movement against the government excesses; many young men were attracted towards it. But later because of induction of criminal elements who were involved in robberies, killing of the innocent & split among themselves, they were alienated. On top of it, strong and ruthless action by the state finished the movement.

DIALOGUE WITH THE PANTH

Now we come to the concluding remarks: Dialogue with the Panth. There is a need for introspection and living by in the light and guidance of Gurbani rather than making Sikhism a show piece and a set of Brahminical rituals. We have to understand the purity and high ethical values of Sikhism rather than get enamored by modernization, which is synonym with Capitalism where profit motive, exploitation, inequality, economic power are the foremost. Even communism/socialism have not proved right. Forced uniformity, central control, inefficient bureaucracy have proved even worse. The system has failed in the world. Both the systems took away freedom from the working

class and minorities and set prices of their produce without consulting them.

Honest labour, voluntary sharing of fruits of labour, sacred life, genuine brotherhood and equality – all main aims of Sikhism, have much superior and enduring values. Added to that, respect for nature and environment, reasonable limits to consumption so as not to cause pain to body nor give rise to evil tendencies, curbing ostentatious display of wealth, spending more on education and health for all, respecting pluralism and minorities, honoring womenhood, are to be inculcated as life-style and real “Halemi Raj” to be aimed at.

The author has not spelt out working details and specifics in each area, but once intentions are clear, these could be worked out. Guru Sahib’s lives and devout Sikhs’ examples have enough role models.

A good foreword to the book by Dr Birenderpal Singh of Punjabi University, Patiala, summarises the trend of thought. Bibliography of English and Punjabi books on similar topics gives the reader choice for further study. Facts and figures at appropriate places add value to the text. The book is a trend-setter and is a must for every library and Sikh home. It is well bound, neatly presented and free from errors. An excellent work.

□

*He who enshrines God's Name in his heart,
Is emancipated even when alive.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 412

ਜੀਵਨ ਮੁਕਤੁ ਮਨਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਵਸਾਏ ॥

SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB
– THE UNIQUE AND UNIVERSAL SCRIPTURE OF THE WORLD –

A REVIEW BY M S RAHI*

Author : Harnam Singh Shan

Publisher : Government of Punjab

Edition : 2004

Pages : 104; Price : Not mentioned (HB)

Scriptural universality of Sri Guru Granth Sahib is an admitted fact since the very beginning. The contents of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the list of the personalities whose *bani* has been included in it, makes its universal approach a self evident fact. As is well-known, there are no mythological stories in Guru Granth Sahib. There are only hymns in praise of the Almighty. The arrangement of the whole composition is such as to raise the level of human consciousness step by step, helping the human beings to reach the highest stage in their life. Dr Harnam Singh Shan, a well-known scholar, has arranged selected hymns from Sri Guru Granth Sahib so as to project the universality of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and its uniqueness. Earlier also, at the time of 500th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev, he brought out. Similarly, compilation under the title *Five Hundred Thoughts of Guru Nanak*, which was also published by the Punjab Government.

In 1993, I took some copies of his book, i.e., *Five Hundred Thoughts of Guru Nanak* for giving to my foreign friends in U.N. Conference at Budapest, Hungary. Professor John Feast, Head of Department of Law, Bremen University, Germany, after looking at the book published in English, Punjabi and Hindi said, “You Sikhs do not know how to make your Guru Granth Sahib known in Europe. Dr Rahi tell them,

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how many people know English and your oriental language in Europe. At least, can't your people publish such small books in French, German and Spanish also, if they want Guru Granth Sahib and its teaching of universality known in Europe.

The present monograph with its all good points suffers from the same malady of language limitations. English is not known much in Europe and many other parts of the world. The teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib deserve at this stage of Sikh history to reach maximum people of the world in as many languages as possible. The Punjab Government should have thought about this. Unfortunately, even the S.G.P.C. which has a substantial budget for Dharam Prachar, has not published Sri Guru Granth Sahib and other literature except in Punjabi and English language. When my small booklet *Guru Granth Sahib in the Eyes of Non-Sikh Scholars*, was published in Spanish, English and French and distributed in many parts of the world and especially in the World Religions Conference at Barcelona, I received many letters from Spain and France to help them to get complete Guru Granth Sahib in their languages. I felt embarrassed as I was unable to tell them the source from which they could get complete Sri Guru Granth Sahib in Spanish or French. I wish such an attempt had been made by the Government of Punjab or the SGPC at the time of the 400th anniversary of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. However, the sincerity of Dr Shan's effort, in the direction of bringing out the uniqueness and universality of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, is highly commendable. His arrangement of ideas under different titles, is indeed very helpful in understanding the message of the Gurus.

However, the fact remains, that if the Sikhs want the uniqueness and universality of Sri Guru Granth Sahib known all over the world, then they would have to do that through their conduct, as mere telling the people about Sri Guru Granth Sahib would not make much difference. In many parts of the world, well-informed people of other nationalities, looking at Gurdwara built on the basis of caste and communities, sarcastically say, "This is what the Sikhs have learnt from Guru Granth Sahib, when the purpose of their Gurus was to create a casteless society?" What goes on in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in many Gurdwaras all around the world is also well known. The conduct of such Sikhs very poorly reflects on the Sikhs

all around the world. Much emphasis on conduct in Sikhism makes it different from other religions of the world. That is why, Sri Guru Nanak made it clear, when he said, '*Sachon Ore Sab Ka, Uppar Sach Achar*'- Truth is higher, still higher is truthful conduct. This is the core teaching of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. If the people of other nations and races find these teachings of Guru Granth Sahib projected in the lives and conduct of the Sikhs, only then they would feel attracted toward Guru Granth Sahib. It is only then, what Toynbee, Pearl S Buck and Professor Archer, as quoted by Dr Shan, have said, would become a reality in the real sense of the word — Sikhism 'a universal and practical religion' spreading the message of 'peace and love' in all the corners of the world.



“The Turban of the Sikhs is not merely a head-dress. It is inseparably connected with the Sikh baptism and the Sikh Code of Conduct.”

*(Lord Avebury quoted in the House of Lord,
London, 5th October, 1976)*

“In our hour of need we did not press the matter of headgear of the Sikh. It would be downright ignoble, I would suggest to press it now.”

*(Gen Sir Reginald Arthur, quoted in the
House of Lord, London, 5th October, 1976)*

CELESTIAL GEMS

A REVIEW BY JASWANT SINGH*

Author : Joginder Singh, IRS

Publishers : Hemkunt Publishers Private Limited, A-78, Naraina Indl Area, Phase I, New Delhi

Pages : 146; Price : Rs 151/-

Of a necklace of 25 equally shining gems by this gifted, spirited, spiritually enlightened author, I will highlight only four as a sample for the sake of brevity.

Mool Mantra : It is the foundation of Guru Granth Sahib Sahib, a recital of Lord's attributes – True is His name, He is Creator, cosmic spirit, without fear, without enmity, immortal, unborn, self illuminated, obtained with Guru's Grace. This is a fine beginning for this devotional book.

Shabad Kirtan : Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism started the tradition of *Shabad Kirtan* for communion of human soul with the *Akal Purkh* in musical ecstasy. It was his genius to overcome the wandering of the mind, wayward thoughts and to channelise them to the Lord. "Listening to *kirtan* is *sine qua non* for a noble living." Guru Nanak would ask his life-long friend Mardana, *Mardana Rabab chhed bani aye. Kirtan* is food for the soul, a tradition in Sikhism. Subsequent Gurus promoted it further. Guru Arjun Dev compiled Guru Granth Sahib in *Ragas* – The whole *bani* can be sung, a unique feature '*Shabad kirtan* flows on in Darbar Sahib, Amritsar throughout the day in a serene atmosphere.

Chand te Chakor : The author while at Kasauli gives a vivid imagery of a night of full moon, a *Chakor* circling round and round but reaching the moon is a distant dream. So is the plight of mortals to reach out to the Divine. We are born in different houses, Hindus,

* Maj Gen, (Dr) AVSM, # 1801, Sector 33-D, Chandigarh

Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, etc. ‘Until one builds truthfully one’s own home brick by brick, the journey towards the Ultimate can never commence. Faith and surrender to the will of God are two cardinal prerequisites for reaching the destination – the stage of bliss.

Parting : Author explains through Gurbani (Guru Granth Sahib, page 885) “Human being ceases to breathe and his breath merges with the air. The flame within mingles with the fire at cremation. The perishable body turns into ashes and blends with dust... Of what avail and help are the bewailers ?” Instead of finding fault with others, let us appreciate their positive qualities, that will nurture healthier living.

A few coloured pictures, Guru Nanak Dev ji, Dawn of Life, Sri Harmandir Sahib – fountain of Gurmat Sangeet, Twilight of Life, The Journey Beyond and a few black and white sketches, the Pledge, Humanity, Anger, add further charm to this well written, beautifully printed, modestly priced, devotional and spiritual book. Some other chapters *Japji Sahib* first five *pauris*, *Amritvela*, *Anand Karaj*, Love, Anger, Slander, Humanity, Fearlessness, Death and the rest are explained nicely on Gurbani’s basis.

The author Sardar Joginder Singh, Lahore-born of 1922 vintage, a Govt of India awardee for outstanding work as IRS officer is equally brilliant and gifted in the art of writing. He has already authored seven well received books. The present volume is a small window into Sikh ethos, Sikh way of life – author’s marvellous contribution.

□

*Cursed be the ritual (or practice)
That makes us forget the Loved One.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p. 590

ਜਾਲਉ ਐਸੀ ਰੀਤਿ ਜਿਤੁ ਮੈ ਪਿਆਰਾ ਵੀਸਰੈ ॥

NEWS & VIEWS

MAJ GEN (DR) JASWANT SINGH AVSM PASSES AWAY

Chandigarh, July 3, 2005. We are pained to inform our readers that Maj Gen (Dr) Jaswant Singh AVSM, General Secretary of the Institute of Sikh Studies and Associate Editor of the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies* died of heart attack on the 3rd of July, 2005 at his residence, #1801, Sector 33-D, Chandigarh. He leaves behind three daughters and his wife, and a void that cannot be filled. The IOSS passed the following condolence resolution in a special meeting held on July 7, 2005.

“The members of the Institute of Sikh Studies were deeply grieved at the untimely, sad and sudden demise of Maj Gen (Dr) Jaswant Singh AVSM on July 3, 2005.

“He had a charismatic personality, and left an indelible impression on the persons who come in contact with him. His contribution to the IOSS was immense. As Secretary of the Institute of Sikh Studies, he worked very hard to ensure efficient functioning of the Institute. He was always prepared to help the needy and played a dynamic role in the affairs of the IOSS and many other social organisations. The members of the IOSS held a condolence meeting on July 7, 2005 and prayed to the Great Guru to give eternal peace to the departed soul and bestow blessings on the members of his family to bear this irreparable loss.”

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### INTERNATIONAL CONCLAVE

ON

### INTERNATIONAL SIKH CONFEDERATION

Chandigarh, September 20, 2005. As announced in the last issue of the *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, the Institute of Sikh Studies, with



collaboration of a number of other Sikh Organisations, is organising an International Conclave on the proposed International Sikh Confederation (ISC) on 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> November, 2005 at Chandigarh. A number of meetings have been held in India earlier, notably at Amritsar, Ludhiana, Patiala, Delhi, etc., besides Chandigarh, in which overwhelming support was expressed for the proposed ISC by the participants. The proposed constitution has been discussed thoroughly in these meetings and has been broadly welcomed. A number of valuable amendments were suggested, and have been incorporated in the draft.

The conclave will be attended by a large number of eminent Sikhs representing major Sikh organisations in India as well as abroad. The proposed constitution will be given a final shape and adopted in the Conclave. It is hoped that an *ad hoc* committee will be nominated on this occasion to mark the launching of the ISC.

All are invited to attend this historic gathering and requested to lend their support to the setting up of the ISC. The proposed body will be the forum in which all kinds of problems of the Sikh community can be discussed at the highest academic level, and solutions acceptable to all Sikhs, evolved for the guidance of all Sikh organisations as well as individuals.

A printed invitation to attend the Conclave is enclosed with this journal. Those who are unable to attend for some reason, are requested to kindly send their support/suggestions in writing.

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SGPC ASKED TO SEEK REVIEW OF SUPREME COURT JUDGMENT

Chandigarh, Sept 7, 2005. In a meeting held on the 7th of Sept 2005, the IOSS expressed grave concern over the uncalled for remarks in a recent judgment of the Supreme Court, holding that Sikhs are a part of the Hindu community. The judgment will also have long-term effects on the minority status of the Sikhs. It was considered necessary to file a review petition, and the SGPC was asked to do it as early as possible. The resolution passed is reproduced below:

The Resolution

Even though

- (i) Who is a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Christian or Parsee;
- or

(ii) Whether Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs are sub-sects of Hinduism were not issues before the Hon'ble Supreme Court for adjudication, nor were representatives of these communities arraigned as parties, the Supreme Court, while deciding Civil Appeal No 4730 of 1999 on August 8, 2005 laid the following observations:

“The so-called minority communities like Sikhs and Jains were not treated as national minorities at the time of framing the Constitution. Sikhs and Jains, in fact, have throughout been treated as part of the wider Hindu community, which has different sects, sub-sects, faiths, modes of worship and religious philosophies. In various codified customary laws like Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act, Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act and other laws of pre- and post-Constitution period, definition of ‘Hindu’ included all sects, sub-sects of Hindu religions including Sikhs and Jains.

“Thus, ‘Hinduism’ can be called a general religion and common faith of India whereas ‘Jainism’ is a special religion formed on the basis of quintessence of Hindu religion”.

A meeting of Sikh intellectuals held on September 10, 2005 at Chandigarh considered these observations and felt that these were unwarranted and not in accordance with the historical facts. The meeting unanimously passed the following resolution:

The petitioners Bal Patil & Anr (who were appellants in Supreme Court Civil Appeal No. 4730 of 1999) approached the Bombay High Court by writ petition seeking issuance of direction to the Central Government to notify Jains as a minority community under Section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992. Section 2(c) of the Act defines minority thus: “Minority, for the purposes of this Act, means a community notified as such by the Central Government;

“The High Court of Bombay disposed of the petition on the ground that the claim of various communities to the status of ‘minority’ for purposes of seeking constitutional protections is one of the main issues pending before a Bench of eleven judges of the Supreme Court in the case of TMA Pai Foundation [2002 (8) SCC 481].

“Amongst several questions which were formulated for answer

by the eleven judges, Bench of the Supreme Court, one was: “What is the meaning and content of the expression ‘minority’ in Article 30 of the Constitution of India?” The Supreme Court laid down its answer as under:

“Linguistic and religious minorities are covered by the expression ‘minority’ under Article 30 of the Constitution. Since reorganization of the States in India has been on linguistics lines, therefore, for the purpose of determining the minority, the unit will be the State and not the whole of India. Thus, religious and linguistic minorities, who have been put on a par in Article 30, have to be considered statewise.....

“The expression ‘minority’ has been used in Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution but it has nowhere been defined.....

“In the background of constitutional scheme, the provisions of the Act, therefore, instead of giving definition of ‘minority’ only provide for notifying certain communities as ‘minorities’ who might require special treatment and protection of their religious, cultural and educational rights. The definition of ‘minority’ given under the Act in section 2(c) is in fact not a definition as such but only a provision enabling the Central Government to identify a community as a ‘minority’ which, in the considered opinion of the Central Government, deserves to be notified for the purpose of protecting and monitoring its progress and development through the Commission.

“Keeping in view the provisions of the Act, the recommendation made by the Commission in favour of the Jains is in the nature of advice and can have no binding effect. The power under section 2(c) of the Act vests in the Central Government which alone, on its own assessment, has to accept or reject the claim of status of minority by a community.

“After the verdict in the eleven judges’ Bench in TMA Pai Foundation case (supra), the legal position stands clarified that henceforth the unit for determining status of both linguistics and religious minorities would be ‘state’.”

The Supreme Court in Civil Appeal No 4730 of 1999, against the order of the Bombay High Court, gave its decision on August 8, 2005 observing that ‘we do not find that any case is made out for

grant of any relief to the appellants in exercise of writ jurisdiction of the High Court and hence, the appellate jurisdiction of this Court’.

As regards the subject matter in appeal before the Supreme Court, it stood adjudicated with its order of August 8, 2005 but the Supreme Court went on to remark:

“Before parting with this case, this Court cannot resist from making some observations which are considered necessary in order to remind the National and State Commissions for Minorities, the scope and nature of their functions under the provisions of the Act and the role they have to play in constitutional perspective.

“The so-called minority communities like Sikhs and Jains were not treated as national minorities at the time of framing the Constitution. Sikhs and Jains, in fact, have throughout been treated as part of the wider Hindu community which has different sects, sub-sects, faiths, modes of worship and religious philosophies. In various codified customary laws like Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act, Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act and other laws of pre- and post-Constitution period, definition of ‘Hindu’ included all sects, sub-sects of Hindu religion including Sikhs and Jains.

“Thus, ‘Hinduism’ can be called a general religion and common faith of India whereas ‘Jainism’ is a special religion formed on the basis of quintessence of Hindu religion”.

(i) Who is a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Christian or Parsee;
or

(ii) Whether Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs are sub-sects of Hinduism were not issues before the Supreme Court for adjudication, nor were representatives of these communities arraigned as parties in the Supreme Court.

The observations of the Supreme Court are not concordant with the settled position of law that no adverse observations be made against persons who are not a party to the proceedings in a court. Reference to codified Hindu law in the remarks of the Supreme Court overlooks the fact that it has its roots in Article 25 of the Constitution of India and the Hon’ble Judges have not taken note of the fact that the National Commission for review of the Indian Constitution in its report submitted to the Government of India, has endorsed the demand of

the Sikhs that they be excluded from the purview of the word 'Hindu' occurring in Article 25. This report submitted to the Government of India on 31st March, 2002 is still awaiting implementation. The Hon'ble Judges have neither taken note of the fact that Advisory Committee on Minorities constituted by the Constituent Assembly of India in its report placed in the Constituent Assembly on 27th August, 1947, specifically mentioned Sikhs in Group B, i.e., population not more than 1 ½ per cent in the Indian Dominion. The others, mentioned in this schedule were Anglo-Indians, Parsees, Plain's tribesmen in Assam, Indian Christians, Muslims and Scheduled castes.

Supreme Court's assertion that since there is no definition of minority in the Constitution of India, therefore, any community who is less than 50% of population in a 'state' can be notified as a minority is not a sound approach. In India, there is centralization of power in the Union Government. So the minority status should be decided on national level and not state level. Declaring Hindus, the overwhelming majority community constituting more than 80% of the total population in India, as a minority community makes mockery of the minority protections.

Even if there is no definition of minority in the Constitution of India (although Advisory Committee on Minorities specifies them), yet India being signatory to the International Covenant on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities is bound by the internationally recognized definition. The United Nations sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities defines the 'minority' as under:

"The term minority includes only those non-dominant groups in a population which possess and wish to preserve stable, ethnic, religious, or linguistic traditions or characteristics, markedly different from those of the rest of the population."

As per the above definition, Sikhs are definitely a minority in India and any denial of the minority status to them smacks of bias and prejudice.

As regards the hectoring of the Commissions for Minorities about the scope and nature of their functions, it is up to these Commissions to chalk out their way of functioning. The Sikhs should act expeditiously and more effectively to secure justice against the efforts

of the Central Government to assimilate them into Hindu fold and wipe out their entity.

To say Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains are Hindus is as oxymoron as saying all Indians are Hindus. The Government of India in its legislative, executive, and judicial wings should not obdurately persist in not rectifying their asinine stand of describing Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains as Hindus. The earlier the necessary corrective measures are implemented the better it is in national interest.

We request the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Delhi Sikh Gurdwaras Management Committee and various other important Sikh organizations to take necessary action in the Supreme Court as well as with the legislative and executive wings of the Government of India to secure justice and fair play for the Sikhs.

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#### **REFERENCE TO SIKHS AS HINDUS RESENTED**

Chandigarh, Sept 10, 2005. Presidents of a number of gurdwaras in Chandigarh and Mohali, met at Kanthala to consider the recent judgment of the Supreme Court. It was unanimously felt that the adverse remarks in the judgment were uncalled for and should not have made without hearing the Sikhs as a party. It was considered necessary to challenge the judgment through a review petition. The resolution passed by the IOSS on the subject was endorsed.

The meeting was chaired by Giani Harinder Singh, President, Kendri Singh Sabha, Chandigarh and was also attended by Sardar Gurdev Singh, President, IOSS, Lt Gen Kartar Singh Gill, Dr Kharak Singh and Sardar Sadhu Singh.

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SGPC CONSTITUTES DHARMIC SLAHKAR BOARD

Amritsar, July 13, 2005. On direction issued from Sri Akal Takht, the SGPC has constituted the Dharmic Slahkar Board to advise on controversial matters relating to Gurbani, Sikh Rahit Maryada, Sikh history and doctrines. The members of the Board are:

Dr Kharak Singh, Chandigarh
 Dr Darshan Singh, Chandigarh
 Principal Ram Singh, Ludhiana
 Dr Mohinder Kaur, Delhi
 Dr Jasbir Singh Sabar

Prof Niranjan Singh Dhese
 Dr Gurnam Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala
 Dr Sarbjinder Singh,
 Sardar Pritam Singh, Bhopal
 Principal, Guru Kashi, Gurmat Institute Damdama Sahib,
 Bathinda
 Principal, Gurmat College, Patiala
 Principal, Shaheed Sikh Missionary College, Amritsar
 Sardar Waryam Singh, Secretary (P), Convenor
 Another four members are likely to be nominated to represent
 the Sikh diaspora.

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#### **SIKH FOOTBALLER SCORES VICTORY, ALLOWED *PATKA***

Vancouver, September 9. It was an unusual battle and an Indo-Canadian Sikh boy has finally won it. A Calgary-based Sikh soccer player won the battle of nerves over wearing *patka* during play.

The battle began when the 17 year old player, a high school student, was told that he could not play in a soccer tournament on the weekend, because he wore *patka*. The referee told Gurinder that non-soccer related clothing items could not be worn on the field.

He asked him to either remove his *patka* or leave the game, the South Asian Observer reported.

Taking the second option, Gurinder decided to boycott the tournament his team was playing. He, however, was not alone as the entire team from Calgary Northwest United stood by him and walked out of the game.

The referee gave a walkover to the other team. After the match, a bewildered Gurinder said, "I could not believe it. This has never happened to me before." He praised his team-mates' resolution to stand by him.

The incident took place during the Langley Labour Day Tournament in which more than 200 teams from Western Canada competed for the title.

Better sense, however, prevailed as the British Columbia Soccer Association overturned the referee's decision, and ruled that Gurinder could play wearing *Patka*. The sports body also issued a statement saying it regretted the incident and would conduct a thorough investigation. (Courtesy : Hindustan Times, September 10, 2005)

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AKAL TAKHT REJECTS THE NANAVATI REPORT

Amritsar, August 8. The Jathedar of Akal Takht, Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti today completely rejected the Nanavati report tabled in Parliament.

Jathedar Vedanti said the community had lost faith in such commissions. He said the findings had given an impression that the Sikhs could not expect justice by constituting commissions.

The victims including the families who were tortured and butchered, had been waiting for the past 21 years to see those directly involved in the anti-Sikh riots hanged. He said everybody in the country including the judiciary, knew that innocent Sikhs were killed mercilessly.

However, all those involved in the riots had been roaming scotfree. Jathedar Vedanti said the denial of justice to the riot victims had destroyed the basic tenets of democracy. (*Courtesy : The Tribune, August 9, 2005*)

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### **‘ATR NOT TO MY SATISFACTION,’ SAYS NANAVATI**

New Delhi, August 8. In a significant development, Justice G.T. Nanavati today expressed dissatisfaction with the Action Taken Report (ATR) tabled by the government following his voluminous report on 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

“ATR is not to my satisfaction. It is to tell Parliament what action has been taken by the government on the recommendations of the Commission,” he told reporters after his report, along with the ATR, was tabled in both Houses of Parliament.

On the indictment of Tytler, he said there was no reason to disbelieve the person who had deposed before the Commission against the Union Minister.

“But I have said he was very probably involved in the riots because the evidence against him was not conclusive. That is why I recommended further inquiry,” Justice Nanavati added.

He said there was no political pressure on the Commission and it had functioned independently.

Justice Nanavati said the riots took place in an “organised manner” and there was no need for Sikhs to name so many Congress leaders unless they were really involved.

Justice Nanavati maintained that local Congress leaders were in



some way “involved” with the riots and further probe was needed in this regard.

He also alleged “police failure,” saying so many people would not have died in three days if the police had taken action.

Observing that riots cannot be prevented, he suggested that there should be quick action by the police and intelligence should be strengthened to minimise the damage.

On politicisation of the issue, he said, for political considerations, his report would be criticised or appreciated by various parties in their own way.

The Commission “did not feel” that there were lapses “at the highest level,” Justice Nanavati said.

“Riots cannot be prevented but quick action should be taken,” he said.

However, he added that the Commission got little material about riots outside Delhi.

“Whatever new affidavits were received were only for compensation and did not merit inquiry,” he said. (*Courtesy: The Tribune, August 9, 2005*)

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#### **SIKH THINKERS FORUM FOR THE REVIEW OF THE SUPREME COURT JUDGMENT**

Chandigarh, Sept 5, 2005. The meeting of the Sikh Thinkers Forum was held here on Sept 5, 2005 to discuss the wide-ranging reaction of the Sikh community against the remarks in a judgment by the Supreme Court of India regarding separate entity of the Sikhs, as well as the situation arising out of Nanavati report and its implications. It was felt that the remarks by the Apex Court in ‘*Obiter Dicta*’ while pronouncing this judgment on the minority rights of the Jain community as reported in the newspapers that the Sikhs are a broader part of the Hindus have created utter disappointment in the minds of the Sikh world. The Forum observed that these remarks of the Supreme Court are not only uncalled for, have rather ignited the most sensitive and volatile issue of the Sikh community. On the one hand, certain fundamentalists and divisive forces of society who were known earlier for the hardline approach towards the Sikhs have, of late, started revising their own opinion in a very explicit manner that the Sikhism

is an independent religion, the unfortunate remarks by the Apex Court are likely to encourage the Hindu Fundamentalist Organizations to reassert again that the Sikhism is a part of the Hindus. The Forum feels that these remarks of the Hon'ble Apex Court would rather undo the recommendations of Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah, the former Chief Justice of India for amendments in the Constitution of India in the National Commission to review the working of the situation that the explanation 2 of Article 25 be omitted meaning thereby, that the Sikhs should not be clubbed with the Hindus, Jainis and the Buddhists in the Constitution of India.

The Forum plans to hold a National Seminar on this and other allied issues concerning the latest scenario of the Sikh Community in September, 2005. The Forum has also decided to approach the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India to review this judgment with a view to deleting these unnecessary remarks in the judgment. The Forum also urges the Government of India for taking stringent legal action against all the culprits involved in 1984 genocide of the Sikhs in order to assuage the burning sentiments of the Sikh Community all around the world.

The meeting was attended by Dr. M.S. Rahi, Forum's Convenor, Dr. Gursharan Singh, its co-convenor, S. Rajinder Singh Bhasin, Dr. G.S. Sethi, Col. (Retd.) J.S. Arora, Col. (Retd.) Kuldip Singh, Professor Kulwant Singh, Professor Jodh Singh, Professor A.S. Dhaliwal, Mrs. Parminder Phool, Dr. (Mrs.) G.K. Nanda, Mrs. Taran Gujral and other prominent scholars.

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UC RIVERSIDE SIKH CHAIR

SEARCH COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION DEPLORED

The Sikhs of Sourthern California, have expressed their resentment over the report of the University Search Committee, recommending Pashaura Singh's appointment to the recently established Sikh Chair. A Press Note issued in this connection by Sardar Raminder Singh Sekhon, Spokesperson, Sikh Institutions of Sourthern California (Riverside Sikh Chair Issue) is reproduced below:

Sikh Community in North America has spent millions of dollars for establishment of Sikh chairs with a view that it will promote Sikh Identity & authentic message of Guru Granth Sahib. But chair holders appointed, although Sikh in appearance, only

challenge and erode the status of Sikh institutions such as Guru Granth and Guru Panth on the basis of questionable documents and formulations. Their research has done more damage to the Sikh community and its religion than any good. The true feelings and expectations of the Sikh community need to be conveyed to these universities in unambiguous terms, otherwise our future generations will have only the distorted picture of Sikh religion, history and culture.

It came to the notice of Sikh Community that recently U.C. Riverside Search committee has recommended the appointment of Dr Pashaura Singh for the chair to the Chancellor. Sikh community knows that in 1993, Pashaura Singh wrote a Ph D thesis on Guru Granth Sahib and submitted it to Toronto University. When the credentials of his research became known, 30 Sikh scholars from different universities all over the world reviewed his research and gave their opinion in the book : *Planned Attack on Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, “materials used in this research has no authenticity, and conclusions drawn challenged the originality and authenticity of Guru Granth Sahib.”

Subsequently, he appeared before the Akal Takht to plead himself guilty for hurting the religious sentiments of the Sikhs. Sri Akal Takht (Highest Sikh Authority) gave him the directive to revise his thesis before its publication (www.SGPC.net online publication). He accepted the *Tankhab* in lieu of wrongs done by him. He promised before Akal Takht to do the needful and accepted the *Tankhab*.

Mr Pashaura then published a book : *The Guru Granth Sahib Cannon Meaning and Authority*, in 2000. On examination of this book one can find that he is still harping on the same issues for which he was summoned by the Akal Takht in 1993 and did not check the authenticity of the documents. He did not change his opinion on the issue. He has once again, through his book, challenged the authenticity and originality of the *Bani*, which is highly uncalled for. Moreover, by publishing the old formulations, he has turned his back to the directive of Akal Takht, which is highly deplorable. By selecting such a person who is religiously dishonest to the directions of Akal Takht and academically

fraudulent for the chair of Sikh Studies at U.C. Riverside, the university has shown utter disregard for the sensitivities of the Sikh community. This issue was discussed, and all academic material in support of Sikh community's opinion was submitted to Dean for Search Committee, but no avail. Sikh Students Association Members at U.C. Riverside also gave their input to the Dean but were ignored.

With regards to U.C. Riverside Sikh Study Chair at Riverside, on May 23, 2005, representatives from Gurdwara Riverside, Gurdwara Alhambra, Gurdwara Vermont, Gurdwara Lankershiem, Gurdwara Buena Park, Sikh Center of Orange County, SEWA, Guru Ram Das Ashram, Gurdwara West Covina, Gurdwara of Ventura County, Gurdwaras of Bakersfield and Sacramento.

S. Rashpal Singh, S. Jagdev S. Atwal, S. Lakbir Singh, S. Sohan Singh Gill, S. Sikander Singh, S. Gurdev Singh Virk, S. Pritam Singh, S. Amarjit Singh, S. Akwinder Singh, S. Harinder Singh, S. Joginder Singh Sandhu, S. Lehmbur Singh, Dr D.S. Gill, S. Tarlok Singh Sandhu, Dr Jasbir Singh Mann, S. Parmjit Singh, S. Jhalman Singh, S. Ujjagar Uppal, S. Gurbachan Sandhu, S. Makhan Singh Sandhu, S. Gurmeet Singh Brar, S. Bharpur Singh Dhanau, S. Atma Singh Kainth, Dr Piara Singh, S. Harjit Singh, S. Gurpreet Singh Khakh, S. Santokh Singh Sahi, S. Jasinder Singh, S. Bahadur Singh, S. Kirtan Singh Khalsa, S. Gagan Singh, Dr Jagdev Singh Dhaliwal, S. Bharpur Singh Takhar, S. Brinderjit Singh Dhillon, S. Sarbjit Singh Sandhu, S. Baljit Singh Bathh, S. Jasmer Singh Randhawa, S. Bahal Singh brar, S. Sukhminder Singh, Inderpal Singh Ahluwalia, S. Ronak Singh Bhullar, S. Dalbir Singh Sanghera, S. Surinder Singh Sidhu, S. Ranjit Singh, S. Raminder Singh Sekhon and Dr Baljeet Singh Sahi, attended this meeting. It was unanimously Resolved to take Appropriate Legal, Political, Social And Religious action for assistance, Urgent Note was sent to the U.C. Riverside Chancellor to stop this Anti-Sikh Appointment on the Sikh chair.

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#### SELECTION OF CHAIR HOLDER

#### DR J S SAINI ENDOWED CHAIR IN SIKH AND PUNJABI STUDIES AT UCR

A number of Sikh Gurdwaras in California have advised the

university authorities not to appoint a wrong person to the chair. A letter addressed to Ms France A Cordova, Chancellor, University of California, Riverside, California, in this connection is reproduced below:

Dear Ms Cordova,

The Sikh Community of Southern California has been very interested and excited about the establishment of the referenced Sikh Study Chair at the UCR. The community has been monitoring the process for quite some time and was anxiously looking forward to the selection of the Chair holder. The University recently interviewed three prospective candidates and apparently the search committee has made its recommendation for a successful candidate.

Through conversations with Dr Harkirat Dhillon by Sikh Community representatives Dr Jasbir Mann and Ajit Randhawa (who donated \$30k), it appears that the recommended person may be Mr Pashaura Singh who is currently at the University of Michigan. If indeed Mr Pashaura Singh is the choice, then the entire Sikh Community of So. California will be utterly dismayed and shocked. The reason being that Mr Pashaura Singh is a very controversial figure due to his track record in regard to misrepresentation of facts, support of unfounded religious theories and attacks on the integrity of the Sikh Scriptures. Mr Pashaura Singh was also rebuked by "Akal Takht" the highest authority of the Sikh religion for wrongs committed by him (ref: [www.sgpc.net](http://www.sgpc.net) publications). The Sikh community is very sensitive about such issues and the University was made aware of these issues through meetings with Dean Pat O'Brien as well as Dean Joel Martin well before the selection and the interview process.

While the Sikh Community is genuinely interested in working closely with the UCR and the future Chair holder to make the Chair a model success, but it will not sit idly by if a person like Pashaura Singh is selected. The Sikh Community is, therefore, requesting you to review this situation urgently in order to minimize any potential conflict. The Sikh Community representatives will be more than happy to meet you at your earliest convenience to discuss this matter further in detail.

Please contact me at (909) 606-1685 or Prof D S Gill at 951-369-5863 in regard to any questions and other information related

to this issue.

Sincerely

Bharpur Takhar

Sikh Temple Riverside

On behalf of the following California Sikh Gurudwaras:  
Riverside, Alhambra, Vermont, Lankershiem, Buena Park, Sikh  
Center of Orange County, SEWA, Guru Ram Das Ashram, West  
Covina, Ventura County, Bakersfield and Sacramento.

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**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
“GURU NANAK HERITAGE OF INTERFAITH UNDERSTANDING AND
HARMONY”**

On November 12-13, in the first symposium of its kind to be held at Lahore’s famous Al-Hamhira Convention Centre, the scholars and leaders of all world religions will make presentations and lead discussions on the universal teachings of Guru Nanak as it impacts on the interfaith understanding and harmony. This symposium is part of a 10 days pilgrimage to Sikh holy places in Pakistan.

From November 12 through November 22, 2005, people of all faiths will join world Sikh delegations to undertake the pilgrimage of peace in Pakistan. The program will begin with the symposium in Lahore, join the Birth day Celebration in Nankana Sahib, undertake pilgrimage to Gurdwara Sri Panja Sahib and Gurdwara Bhai Joga Singh in Peshawar, and conclude with a prayer at Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib. The participants will follow the foot-steps of Guru Nanak to pay their homage and to pray for peace.

Guru Nanak (1469-1539) began his life journey from what Sikhs call the *Janam Asthan*, now located 75 miles west of Indo-Pakistan border; travelled every where from China in the North East, Sri Lanka in the South and Baghdad in the West, to spread his message of peace and harmony among people of all religions, colours, and nationalities. He completed his journey in the town of *Kartarpur*, the town he founded on the land now situated on the Indo-Pakistan border. There, he founded a community of spiritual householders who would spread peace and harmony. The mausoleum at his burial place and guru-asthan at his cremation ground, both lying side by side in this holy city, bear witness to his all-inclusive (*sarab sanjhi*) teachings.

Several organizations are sponsoring this symposium to create a momentum towards involving Sikh community in particular and the world community in general to undertake projects towards reviving Guru Nanak's legacy for today's world starting from the holy land of his birth.

The Symposium program is being developed around the following themes:

Heritage of Nanak's Foot-Steps in Pakistan
Janam Asthan and Kartarpur in Sikh Doctrines
 Islamic Contributions to Interfaith Understanding
 Sufi Literature on Interfaith Harmony
 Management of Holy Shrines and World Peace
 History of Pursuit Towards Formation of PSGPC
 Management of Sikh Shrines and Indo-Pakistan Relationship
 Guru Nanak's Teachings in Today's World of Conflict
 Guru Nanak Heritage and Sikhs Today
 Looking Back to Move Forward

The organizers are inviting high ranking academics from all over the world to participate.

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## Letters to Editor

### INTERNATIONAL SIKH CONFEDERATION

Dear Editor,

Sometime back I had written you about formation of *International Sikh Confederation*. Now action is being taken to hold an international conclave on the proposed apex body in the month of November 2005 to set up an *ad hoc* committee for its creation.

I wish that a group of *Panth dardi* intellectual would come forward to solve many many complex matters concerning the Sikh community throughout the world.

Gujarat Sikh Pritinidhi Parishid fully supports the formation of ISC at their earliest after seriously considering all aspects to make it a success. The Fate of World Sikh Council is fresh in the mind of the Sikh and controversy created by SGPC regarding listing of Harmandir Sahib as world Heritage site by UNESCO and wasted Rs 40 lacs of

*sangat* money and earning bad name also. I do not understand why SGPC authorities feel shy of taking support from the Sikh intelligentsia.

Yours sincerely  
 Mohinder Singh  
 BE Mawra (USA)  
 Hony General Secretary  
 GSSP, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

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Dear Editor,

We congratulate you for founding the International Sikh Confederation. We endorse its proposed constitution. God bless your sincere efforts for organizing the Sikhs under one umbrella.

We have seen that some people in North America tried to form similar organizations and failed to provide proper structure that could keep these organizations active for future generations. Some of the people in these organizations had personal interests and tried to create their own *maryada*. There should be some safeguards in place, so that such splinter groups and professional politicians do not take over the organization.

We have full faith in the capability of the individuals and the organizations who are working on this project, that they will be successful in creating this organization which will provide valuable service to the Sikh Community all over the World.

Balwant Singh Bola
 Sikh Education & Research Centre of Windsor
 P.O. Box 21100, Tecumseh, Ontario
 Canada, N8N 4S1

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Dear Editor,

You have undertaken a very important task of organising a representative body of the 'Guru Panth'. I congratulate you on your initiative. We appreciate your plan to include Sikhs from all over the world in the general body. It meets the long-standing demand of Sikh diaspora, which now forms a very visible and important section of the Panth. As a word of suggestion, we have to develop a procedure keeping in mind, the sharply opposing forces, such as *sant samaj*, *deradars* & *Jathedars*, etc., who do not accept the Sikh Rehat Maryada. Those



politicians, Akalis who reconciled with Gurmat philosophy to please their political masters, should have no part to play in this organisation.

Gurdev Singh Sangha  
v/President, Sikh Social & Educational Society,  
Ontario, Canada  
<dev101ca@hotmail.com>

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### **DISMEMBERMENT OF SHRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB**

Dear Sir,

Through an interview of Prof. Darshan Singh Ji Ex Jathedar Shri Akal Thakt on the TV Programme 'Gurbani' aired here, on May 14 and 21, 2005; we have come to know about the worst attack to date on Sikhism, unfortunately and shamefully with the active connivance and participation of some Sikh leaders.

It is learnt that under the guise of making it easier to read, the Guru Granth Sahib was being re-written without "Lag Mataras". It is a well-known fact that without these essential grammatical components, the very meaning of the word changes and so does the meaning of the sentence. This will give rise to many a misconstrued and utterly wrong meanings and interpretations to the Gurbani.

Now a new name is being given to this shameful exercise, transliteration for ease of reading. The English dictionary defines transliteration as "to write or spell words in corresponding characters of another alphabet". Hence, you cannot do transliteration from Gurmukhi to Gurmukhi.

The matter is too serious. It is dismemberment of Guru Granth Sahib. It is not only sacrilege and distortion of meanings and Sikh philosophy, a counterfeit *swaroop* was being prepared. After few decades and at the appropriate time, this counterfeit Swaroop could easily be paraded as the original *bir*, being found some where in a remote village of Punjab, as a new research and find.

Through your esteemed columns, I request the Jathedar of Shri Akal Thakt Sahib to rise above petty politics of Punjab, recognize his responsibility to the position he occupies and order a Panthic Enquiry. There are so many questions needing answers.

Col Avtar Singh  
<singh.a@rogers.com>

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**A CASE OF HATE CRIME**

Dear Editor,

I have received the July-September 2005 issue of the Journal, and as usual, it contains instructive and thought-provoking articles. The article by Sardar Baldev Singh is very interesting. The author has put in hard labour and fully researched it. I read again the Preface of the Book of articles refuting McLeod in Sardar Bachittar Singh's *Planned Attack on Guru Granth Sahib Ji*. Both make a very painful reading. One is unable to understand why, legal action could not be taken against Pashaura – McLeod, at least as a hate crime, since freedom of the Press should have some limits. It may not have in these countries, but in Canada atleast there is a hate law which prohibits such writings. And in India there must be restrictions on freedom of Press and such writings must be prohibited. Our learned jurists (both lawyers – retd judges) should have timed at least – but our leaders as usual are inept, could not care less ! I think, Pashaura, Harjot, etc., are lucky to be born in India had they been born in an Islamic Country and indulged in such writing about sacred scriptures, they would be running for their lives.

Yours sincerely  
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*He alone lives in whom God resides.*

*No one else is truly alive.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 142

ਸੋ ਜੀਵਿਆ ਜਿਸੁ ਮਨਿ ਵਸਿਆ ਸੋਇ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਜੀਵੈ ਕੋਇ ॥